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Slavery to Liberation: The African American Experience (Second Edition)

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Slavery to Liberation

The African American Experience

Second Edition

Edited by

Ogechi E. Anyanwu, Lisa Day, Norman W. Powell, Joshua D. Farrington, Gwendolyn Graham, Sophia Carter

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PREFACE

One of the significant challenges facing college students is the ever-rising costs of assigned class textbooks in recent years. It is a challenge that African and African American Studies (AFA) at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) has sought to address. On August 26, 2016, AFA faculty met to discuss the textbook issue and how to attract students to the program, retain them, and improve the quality of instruction. At the end of the meeting, AFA faculty first decided to replace the costly textbook assigned to students in AFA 201: The African Experience with high-quality, open-access articles available through EKU Libraries free of charge to students. Starting with the Spring 2017 semester, all AFA 201 faculty assign open-access articles to their students. Second, AFA faculty decided to embark on the publication of an open-access edited textbook and to make it available to students enrolled in AFA 202: The African American Experience free of charge. Shortly after the meeting, a call for submissions was released, and proposals for chapter contributions came in from worldwide. Accepted proposals then turned into full-length articles that went through a rigorous review process by the editors.

Slavery to Liberation: The African American Experience results from AFA's commitment to providing scholarly reading materials at no cost to EKU students. The first edition was released in 2019, and a second edition was released in 2022 to provide an even more thorough overview of the African American experience by covering topics such as music, intersectional feminism, Black Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism.

Published by EKU Libraries, the book intends to give both instructors and students in African American Studies a comprehensive and up-to-date account of African Americans' cultural and political history, economic development, artistic expressiveness, sexuality, and religious and philosophical worldviews in a critical framework. Written in accessible language, *Slavery to Liberation* offers a sound

interdisciplinary analysis of select historical and contemporary issues surrounding the origins, manifestations, and challenges of White supremacy in the United States.

This book is suitable for undergraduate and graduate students seeking to expand their knowledge of the entirety of the Black experience in the United States. Scholars teaching African American courses focusing on Black history, literature, identity formation, education and social change, and race and politics will find this book particularly useful. The interdisciplinary methods and approaches we adopted in this book will enhance students' critical thinking, writing, and speaking skills—tools they will need to excel in their lives and careers. By placing race at the center of the work, the book offers significant lessons for understanding the institutional marginalization of Blacks in contemporary America and their historical resistance and perseverance.

Special thanks are due to Sara Zeigler, former Dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences (CLASS), former Rose Perrine, Associate Dean of CLASS, and Betina Gardner, former Dean of Libraries, for their unflinching support not only for the project but for AFA at EKU. Their commitment to the growth of AFA is exemplary, and the program is indebted to them. This book benefited from the tireless efforts, enthusiastic support, and professionalism of EKU librarians. Victoria Koger and Linda Sizemore supported this project from the beginning, a commitment that Kelly Smith came to embrace when she became the AFA Library liaison. By investing their time and expertise and going beyond their call of duty, Koger, Sizemore, and Smith ensured the project's timely completion. We thank them profoundly. We are particularly grateful to Sandra Añez Powell. Originally from Venezuala, she now serves as an independent diversity consultant in Richmond, Kentucky, as well as a painter whose work includes the cover page of the first edition of the book. Finally, thanks to Melissa Abney, EKU Libraries' graphic artist, for designing the front and back cover of the book's current edition.

Finally, and no less importantly, we thank the contributors to the project for trusting us with their manuscripts and for their patience throughout the editorial process. Our contributors brought their expertise to help our readers understand the diversity and richness of African America's histories, peoples, and cultures. They are

affiliated with higher education institutions around the globe, including EKU, Ball State University, San Francisco State University, Leiden University, Virginia State University, Georgetown University, the University of Oklahoma, DePauw University, the University of Texas at Arlington, Stark State College in Ohio, Trinity Washington University in Washington, D.C., Elizabeth City State University, Tennessee State University, and the University of Pennsylvania.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the African American Experience

Aaron Thompson
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Readers of this textbook are most likely taking a course called The African American Experience. From my perspective as a sociologist and someone who has spent three decades in higher education, HIGHER EDUCATION MATTERS! Insight and knowledge are the paths for success in people of all races and classes. The family is where these paths begin. The Black family is a family of strengths and diversity. Growth and success can take place within our institution regardless of the structural make up. To make this growth and success possible, we need to know the truth of our history, knowledge of the structure, the courage to seek assistance, and the strength to lend assistance.

Being poor, Black, and Appalachian did not offer me great odds for success, but constant reminders from my parents that I was a good and valuable person helped me to see beyond my deterrents to the true importance of education. My parents, who could never provide me with monetary wealth, truly made me proud of them by giving me the gift of insight and an aspiration for achievement. To close opportunity and achievement gaps, we need to have a strong early childhood education through a strong postsecondary education. We can start by (1) Teaching our children the importance of education for the sake of knowledge as well as for economic survival; (2) Appreciating cultural and economic diversity (understanding that race and class are social mechanisms for prejudice and discrimination); and (3) Teaching our children to look beyond the limitations that society might have placed on them so as to build on steps one and two. This textbook aims to provide a foundation in these areas, among others.

Many Black families throughout the United States face seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and the future seems to be a shadow rather than a reality. Many live in conditions of poverty and many in one-parent households. But as my mother always

said, "If you listen to the morals that are being taught to you, throw out the ones with hatred, and just learn how to count your money; then you will do okay in life." My mother seems to have the perfect answer to many of the problems of our society in this one statement. But as we all know, when many of us were growing up, there was very little money to count. Today, with both mother and father doing paid labor, it is harder for parents to give the direct attention to children that my mother showered on me. This issue could become problematic since socializing our children to understand that education is the important route to success usually starts in the family at an early age. Economics can be the culprit in the successes and failures of our children in this society. With education, success is not assured, but without education, failure seems imminent.

Even if African Americans are strong academically, research shows that because they are more disadvantaged economically, there is a greater chance they may not pursue and continue an education. Many roots of these problems lie in the legacy of slavery and the power of racism; the impediments to gaining these necessary skills are rooted in the history of Black America.[1] Black Americans and their families have faced segregation, discrimination, and inequalities throughout the history of industrial America. When compared to Whites, Blacks were more often faced with discriminatory laws, individually and in the family structure. Under slave law, Black women, Black men, and their children were the property of slave owners. Although during the slavery era there were many freed married Blacks, family units under slavery existed at the slave master's discretion. People could marry, but property could not, and slaves were considered property. Although many slaves defied this law and got married within their own community, slave owners could destroy this bond at any time they saw a need to do so by merely selling one or both of the partners to different slave owners.

After slavery, Whites created formal and informal laws for the domination of Black labor, a labor they once owned. These "Jim Crow" laws were enacted after Reconstruction. These laws as much as anything else fostered an ideology of Blacks as

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[1] B.T. Dill, "The dialectics of Black womanhood," Signs*: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 4, (1979): 543-555.

subordinate and Whites as superordinate. These laws also contributed to a division of labor by sexes in the Black family, as well as placing barriers to the formation of Black two-parent households. For example, if a Black woman married a Black man, then the property she owned would go to him. Since the laws stated that property could be owned only by males, women did not relish the idea of working to give property to a male, so many decided to remain unmarried. If the Black husband did not have a job, then the state could take his property. Of course, there was a good chance that the Black male would not have a job, so many marriages did not take place. Thus, with the barriers to the Black family being an intact family unit, there was a greater chance for poverty in the Black community. Black women faced a dismal prospect for survival above the poverty level because they needed to find a job that could support them and, in many cases, their children. The state made laws stipulating that if Black parents could not afford to care for their children, then the children could be apprenticed out as free labor. When girls were apprenticed out, most went to White households as domestic help. When boys were apprenticed out, they went as outside manual laborers such as blacksmiths. These divisions reflected a wider labor market distinction between men and women as well as the distinctions made in the African American community. [2]

Historically, there is a difference between the family structures of Black Americans and White Americans. The work roles inside and outside the households offer one gendered difference. American plantation slavery did not make a distinction between the work performed by Black men and that done by Black women. Both worked in the fields and both worked within the household doing domestic labor. Gender role expectations were very different for Black and White women. Black women were not seen as weak; in fact, they were seen as being able to work in the fields, have a baby in the evening, and cook breakfast the next day.[3] Black men also experienced

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[2] E. Boris & P. Bardaglio, "Gender, race, and class: The impact of the state on the family and the economy, 1790-1945," in Families and work, ed. Naomi Gerstel and Harriet Engel (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University, 1987).

[3] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010).

different gender role expectations than did White men. Under slavery, the Black male understood that both he and his family (whatever family could exist at this point) were at the service of the White family.

In the late 1800s when there was a need for more women in the work force, laws were loosened to include this need. These laws had a significant effect on the White family but very little effect on the Black family. Later, when Black family members moved into the industrial sector, they went into the paid labor market at a different pace and level than the White family. Black women most often were paid less than Black men or White women, and they always maintained jobs in the paid labor market as servants, seamstresses, laundresses, and other domestic positions. Black women were not allowed to serve as salesclerks, cashiers, bookkeepers, and other clerical jobs, which were filled by many White women in the labor market. In 1900, Black women constituted approximately 20 percent of the female population and were 23 percent of the servant population. By 1920 they were 40 percent of the servant population. As the twentieth century continued, the Black female servant demographic proportionally grew compared to other populations.[4]

Black men who had job skills in many cases could not practice those skills. For example, Blacks were not allowed to join many of the trade unions in the South where most Blacks lived. The United Mine Workers Union in the South used Blacks as strikebreakers but experience difficulties getting Black members accepted as regular union members. Thus, in many cases Blacks who worked as miners remained outside the union, with inadequate pay compared to the White union members.[5] Because of a history of discriminatory laws undermining family structure, the Black family did not have a support system going into the paid labor market. Often there were no husbands in the family. Black women could not depend economically on men because many did not have husbands or their husbands faced a labor market that discriminated against

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[4] A. Kessler-Harris, *Women Have Always Worked: An Historical Overview. Old Westbury* (NY: Feminist Press; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), 83.

[5] Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black family in slavery and freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Vintage Books, 1976).*

them. This lack of labor force participation by the Black male led the Black female to see him as a liability to her and her children, which further undermined the Black family structure. To survive in the labor market, Black women would accept any job to support their family, but the jobs that were available were the traditionally "female-specific" jobs such as house cleaners, cooks, nannies, and other domestic roles. The few jobs that were available to Black men were also jobs that were of a domestic nature. These jobs tended to pay less than jobs that were reserved for the White male.

In early industrial America, a family wage system was enacted. A family wage system is one that is designed to pay enough money to the male in the paid labor force to support him and his family. This system allowed the woman to stay in the household and the man to stay in the paid labor force with the title of "head of household." Although laws stated that men were heads of households, Black men could not assert themselves as the undeniable heads of their households if they did not have the economic ability to back their claims. Thus, a pattern of single female-headed households started in the Black family. Black men clearly did not and could not make a family wage for their family, and so Black women continued to work. Since Black men did not have the political or economic power structure on their side to help keep their families intact, the patriarchal father was not as dominant in the Black household as he was in the White family.

White women and Black women shared the burden of being forced to be in domestic positions in the home, and when they had to get paying jobs, they were forced to occupy sex-typed jobs in the labor market. The difference here is that the family wage White women depended upon was considerably higher than the wage Black women enjoyed or expected. Without a doubt, Black women in the United States have not been able to depend on a constant family wage; thus, they never have.

Black women have headed their households for most of the twentieth century and have been accustomed to accepting all kinds of jobs throughout their lives to support their families. Black men are still experiencing unemployment and underemployment, and when they do obtain jobs, the majority of jobs are in the

secondary labor market or in work that many White men would not accept. Going into the twenty-first century, Black female-headed households comprise approximately 54 percent of all Black families with children. This percentage was almost as high as the total Black male paid labor force participation. Currently, it is difficult for a Black woman to obtain enough education to increase her chances in the labor market; yet, she still surpasses the Black male in gaining these necessary resources. With the Black male's inability to break the barriers of institutional racism, it is extremely hard to attain and sustain the ideal of a dual-career Black family.

Women as a whole are getting more education, and dual-earner marriages are the norm in America now instead of single-earner marriages. Children expect to see their mothers as well as their fathers working outside the household and supporting the family financially. This shift will likely bring about a change in the structure of the family. Hopefully, more egalitarian conditions for males and females will emerge. However, the Black family, in general, remains financially unstable when compared to the White family. Black women are not experiencing the same level of newfound freedom in the paid labor market that White women are beginning to find. Black men are still underemployed or unemployed when compared to their White counterparts. Until Black workers reach a point in our society where they are operating on the same footing as the White workers (e.g., equal education, equal employment, equal pay), Blacks will be hard pressed to advance equitably in the twenty-first century with an egalitarian balance in the family and work. Labor market participation, low wages for both sexes, and discriminatory laws have affected the Black family structure, producing the large number of households headed by a woman. The family is the primary institution for socialization in our society, and this is where we should start looking for answers and providing solutions.

Reflecting on the history of Black men and women in the United States, Black poet Margaret Walker observed, "Handicapped as we have been by a racist system of dehumanizing slavery and segregation, our American history of nearly five hundred years reveals that our cultural and spiritual gifts brought from our African past are still

intact." [6] Indeed, from the transatlantic slave trade of the fifteenth century through the twenty-first century, African Americans have suffered the injustices of systemic racism and White supremacy. Yet, Black history is not just a story of oppression, but one of resilience and resistance. As Walker notes, it is also not a story that begins with slavery, but in Africa. This African legacy not only survived the brutality of American history, but shaped the development of America itself, as Black men and women contributed to the nation's history, culture, politics, military, and society from its inception. It is not an exaggeration to say that African American history is American history.

The African American experience was, and is, one shaped not just by race, but by class, gender, sexuality, time, and place. The experience of Phillis Wheatley, an enslaved poet who lived in Boston in the 1770s was quite different from the experience of enslaved women on rice plantations in South Carolina's Gullah coast. In the 1960s, the experience of civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr., the son of a middle-class preacher from Georgia, was quite different from that of Black Panther Fred Hampton, the son of working-class parents in Chicago. Yet, as diverse as the African American experience has always been, a shared racial experience transcends the lines of class, gender, time, and place. Regardless of their social status, economic success, or intellectual prowess, even the most successful African Americans combatted the same discrimination, inequality, and oppression based solely on what W.E.B. DuBois termed "the color line." Thus, part of a shared African American experience, from the transatlantic slave trade through Jim Crow and beyond, centers on racial oppression.

Focused broadly on the themes of oppression and resistance, this book covers a myriad of the African American experience, from the African roots of "Gumboot Dancing" to contemporary Black politics. Intentionally interdisciplinary, this book features scholars from diverse fields such as art history, education,

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[6] Maryemma Graham, ed., *On Being Female, Black, and Free: Essays by Margaret Walker, 1932-1992* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

religion, history, military studies, music, and public health. The essays in this book are designed to introduce undergraduates and the general public to the historical and contemporary issues surrounding African American studies, as well as to provide fresh insights into traditionally neglected topics.

Chapter 2

Concepts of Beauty: Black and White Connotations

Norman W. Powell
Eastern Kentucky University

"Color is neutral. It is the mind that gives it meaning."[1]
— *Roger Bastide*

INTRODUCTION

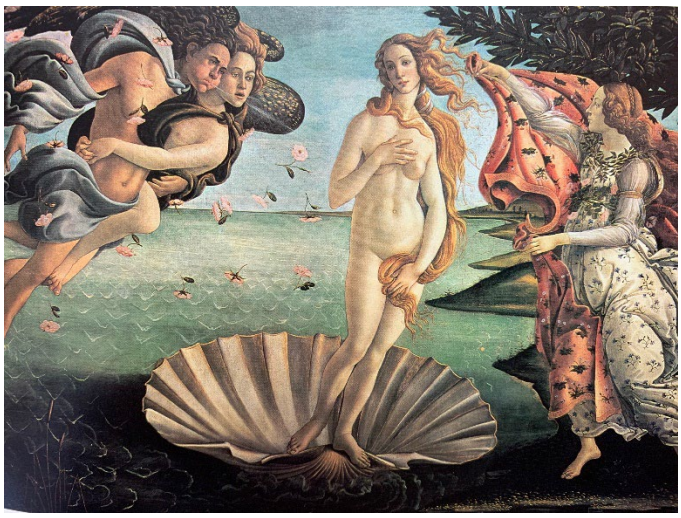
This chapter explores the origins of Western standards of beauty and the related connotations of the colors black and white, particularly interrogating how the color black came to be associated with ugliness and the color white became associated with beauty. These associations have come from such disparate areas as Classical art, Biblical interpretation, historical accounts, fashion trends, and popular culture. This chapter reexamines why the relationship between African Americans and White Americans has historically been so complicated and volatile. It also analyzes the history of discrimination against people of African descent and why, based on biblical interpretations, devout Christians, Muslims, Jews, and other religious populations have supported African slavery.

Religion has always played a prominent role in the evolution and the development of ideas, attitudes, and behaviors of humankind, including social constructions of color. According to Nina G. Jablonski, "Associations of light with good and darkness with evil were common in classical and early Christian culture and tended to dominate perceptions of other peoples with different skin pigmentations."[2] In Christian theological teaching, the color white has been historically associated with innocence, purity, and virtue (God). The color black has been associated with evil, death, and darkness (the devil). This symbolic use of the colors of white and black has provided Christianity with a powerful means of

[1] Roger Bastide, "Color, Racism, and Christianity," *Daedalus*, 96:2 (Spring 1967), 312.
[2] Nina G. Jablonski, *Living Color: The Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color* (University of California Press, 2012), 314.

identifying and recognizing good and evil.[3] This light and dark colorism evolved over time and became associated with people as a result of the expansion of commercial interchange between countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, "linking blackness with otherness, sin and danger… [into] an enduring theme of medieval, Western and Christian thought."[4]

Figure 1. Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus*, 1485, tempera on canvas, 172.5 x 278.5 cm, Florence, Galleria Degli Uffizi. Accessed October 30, 2019. https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/birth-of-venus



"Western origins of the establishment of the standards of beauty," according to Sharon Romm, "began around 2,400 years ago in Greece and Rome."[5] Similarly, Antonio Fuente del Campo noted that "The ancient Greeks believed that a beautiful face was defined in terms of a harmonious proportion of facial features."[6] These Greek and Roman standards of beauty have been universally transmitted through the ages. Greek statues eloquently expressed and confirmed the aesthetics of the face and the body. Some other important characteristics of beauty, according to the Greeks, included a straight nose, a low

[3] Bastide, 312-27.
[4] Jablonski, 157-159.
[5] Sharon Romm, "Art, Love, and Facial Beauty," *Clinical Plastic Surgery*, 14:4 (October 1987), 579-583.
[6] Antonio Fuente del Campo, "Beauty: Who Sets the Standards?" *Aesthetic Surgery Journal* (May/June 2002), 267-268.

forehead for the look of youth, perfect eyebrows that formed a delicate arch just over the brow bone, and perhaps the most important standard of beauty, the color of hair. Blonde hair was the most prized and highly valued.[7]

Figure 2. Raphael, *Madonna in the Meadow* , 1505-1506, oil on panel, 3' 8 ½" x 2' 10 ¼", Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum. Accessed October 30, 2019. https://www.khm.at/objektdb/detail/1502/

The Romans continued to reinforce and build upon the standards of beauty established by the Greeks. During the Middle Ages, beauty standards for women were clearly defined. Hair was to be blonde and fine like thin golden strands.[8] If one's hair was not naturally blonde, it was to be dyed or bleached. Regarding the eyes, a woman with grey eyes was considered to be especially beautiful. In the fifteenth century, during the Italian Renaissance, concepts of beauty standards evolved into new levels of expression. During this period of artistic innovation, standards of beauty for women and men became universally imprinted in minds throughout the known world. Important vehicles for spreading this new level of beauty criteria were the explosion of paintings and sculptures

[7] Romm, 579-583.
[8] Ibid.

by the classic Renaissance artists such as *Madonna of the Meadows* by Raphael (1481), *The Last Supper* by Leonardo Da Vinci (1495-98), and *Birth of Venus* by Sandro Botticelli (1482). The above painting, *The Birth of Venus* by Botticelli, is an example of a Renaissance illustration of the female standard of facial beauty. As these paintings reveal, "Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty."[9]

The works of the Renaissance masters established standards of beauty for the centuries that followed.[10] Artistic standards of beauty that related to Black and White colorism, was not only applied to human characters, but also to artistic representations of Christ. Scholars have described how many of those early Western painters intentionally began a "whitening or bleaching" process in their artistic renderings of Christ.[11] This effort gradually changed painted images of Christ in the Western world from a Semitic to an Aryan man. It was important that images and representations of the Son of God not be depicted as exuding Blackness or darkness. This gradual "Aryanization of Christ" was consistent with the evolving respective negative and positive associations with the colors of black and white.[12]

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[9] David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1904), 234.
[10] Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *A World History of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 357.
[11] Bastide, 315.
[12] Alison Gallup, Gerhard Gruitrooy, and Elizabeth M. Wiesberg, *Great Paintings of the Western World* (Fairfield, Connecticut: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 1997), 107.

Figure 3. Leonardo Da Vinci, *The Last Supper*, 1498, tempera and oil on plaster, 15’ 1” x 29’ 0”, Milan, Santa Maria delle Grazie. Accessed October 30, 2019. https://cenacolovinciano.vivaticket.it/index.php?wms_op=cenacoloVinciano.

The Last Supper by Leonardo Da Vinci is an example of classic art in which Christ is depicted with blond hair. The initial dark hair and beard became light or blond. The eyes became a light blue.

In the sixteenth century during the era of Queen Elizabeth I, women had their own concept of beauty. The face of the idealized woman of beauty was a pale white. They plucked their eyebrows and also used white lead as facial makeup to make them appear angelic. Some women even became ill and died as a result of putting the white lead on their skin to make it lighter. Skin that was tan or dark was not considered to be attractive because it was an indication that one was poor and worked outside in the fields. There were two primary factors that greatly influenced popular attitudes associated with the colors black and white. The oldest of these factors was the prevailing societal preferences for people with pale, light skin. This preference for lighter skin was based on the belief that it was visual confirmation that these individuals were not field workers, peasants, or slaves.[13] The second factor that had a powerful impact on the preference for white over black was the widespread symbolic colorism reinforced by Christianity and other religions.

[13] Jablonski, 157.

The Christian associations with the color white were purity and virtue, and associations with the color black were evil and sin.[14] Since the Middle Ages, Western culture and practices have been fairly consistent in attitudes toward light skin. Light skin continues to be considered beautiful and dark skin considered less attractive.[15]

THE CURSE OF HAM

Perhaps the most significant influence on universal attitudes and negative perceptions of people of color is the biblical story of the "Curse of Ham" found in the King James Version (1611) of the Bible in Genesis 9:18-27. The event occurs after Noah and his three sons and their families have left the ark after the Great Flood. Noah's three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. One day, Noah became drunk from wine made from grapes grown in his vineyard. He fell asleep nude on the floor in his tent. Ham's two brothers, Shem and Japheth, turned away and did not view their father's naked body. Ham refused to turn away and saw Noah drunk and naked. Shem and Japheth took a garment, put it on their shoulders, and backed into the tent. They covered Noah with the garment without looking at their father's nude body. After Noah later awoke and became aware of what Ham had done, he pronounced the biblical curse, "Cursed be Canaan; the lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers."[16]

Historically called "The Curse of Ham," Noah's curse was actually directed at Canaan, who was the son of Ham. Noah then blessed Ham's two brothers, Shem and Japheth. It was after this event that the three sons of Noah went with their families to populate the entire earth. Canaan and his family traveled to settle in the area of the world that is now the continent of Africa. One of Ham's brothers (Japheth) went to settle in the area that is now Europe, and the other brother (Shem) went to settle with his family in the area known as Asia.

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[14] Jablonski, 158.
[15] David Brion Davis, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 90.
[16] Gen. 9:18-27 (KJV).

Noah's statement that Canaan would be the "lowest of slaves" to his two brothers became universally interpreted as an eternal affliction of servitude by God. The Curse of Ham was widespread throughout Europe and eventually spread to America. The Christian Bible does not mention skin color in the story of Noah's curse, but the conflating of Black skin color with the punishment of eternal servitude later became combined with the original biblical interpretation of the Curse of Ham. The text of the biblical story was translated over centuries by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian writers.

According to rabbinical sources (writings in the Hebrew language by Jewish rabbis during the Middle Ages), another significant component of the Curse of Ham story emerged. In the Hebrew interpretation, all those on Noah's ark during the flood were prohibited from engaging in sexual intercourse. Ham did not obey this mandate and had sex with his wife. He was then punished by God and his skin was turned black. This rabbinical version of the Curse of Ham did not include slavery or servitude, as did the biblical version.[17] Though these were two separate interpretations of the Curse of Ham account, over time, the distinctions were often not noted by other writers and religious leaders.[18]

In the early Muslim interpretation of the Curse of Ham story, Ham was turned black by God, but was not cursed with eternal servitude.[19] When ancient Greeks and Romans first encountered Black Africans, they devised various theories to explain the dissimilarity of the Africans' dark skin color, which became universally accepted in Greece and Rome and throughout much of the known world. These environmentally determined theories postulated that populations living in the southern areas of the world were burned dark by the sun. Those who lived in the northern areas were pale due to the lack of sunlight. Those living in the middle regions, the Greeks and later the Romans, had skin color that was "just right."[20]

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[17] David M. Goldenberg, *Black and Slave: The Origins and History of the Curse of Ham* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 19.
[18] Ibid.
[19] David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 69.
[20] Goldenberg, 29.

THE EMERGENT DEFINITION OF AFRICANS AS THE "OTHER"

The Tao de Ching set perceptions of beauty in Chinese philosophical and religious tradition: "When people see some things as beautiful, other things become ugly. When people see some things as good, other things become bad."[21] During the medieval times, Greco-Roman "accounts of the 'monstrous races' exhibit[ed] a marked ethnocentrism which made the observer's culture, language, and physical appearance the norm by which to evaluate all other peoples."[22] As a result of expanding exploration and commercial interaction beyond the borders of Europe, knowledge of other races and cultures became widespread. The inhabitants from areas in the world such as Africa, Ethiopia, Albania, China, and India became known later to Europeans in the nineteenth century as "The Other."[23]

The physical appearances, behaviors, languages and customs of these diverse populations were viewed as alien by Medieval Europeans. Non-European populations were mistakenly considered very different from the populations of Medieval Europe. The Roman author and naturalist philosopher, Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE), and other writers such as Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE), included non-European populations among the groups that became referred to as "monstrous races" due to their marked differences.[24] Leo Africanus, a pre-colonial Muslim diplomat and traveler born in Granada, Spain, was renowned throughout Europe and the known world for his book *Description of Africa*. The work was highly regarded by academicians and scholastic communities in all of Europe. The book focused on the people and geography of North and West Africa and was based on the many observations and trips made by Africanus to those areas of the world. His vivid description of Africans "brought the African other to the popular

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[21] Alan Watts, *What is Tao?* (Novato, California: New World Library, 2000), 33.
[22] Goldenberg, 29.
[23] John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 26.
[24] Goldenberg, 47.

consciousness of those that never left Europe." Africanus described the people as engaging in criminal and "most lewd practices" all day long with "great swarms of harlots among them," "neglecting all kinds of good arts and sciences," and "continually liv[ing] in a forest among wild beasts."[25] The descriptions of Africans in the early Greek writings, centuries prior to Leo Africanus' book, were equally negative and pejorative. Very few Europeans of that era had ever traveled to foreign and distant areas of the world, such as Africa. Africanus's published descriptions of Africa and Africans emerged as the primary source of information about the continent and its people for approximately 400 years.[26] His work became extremely popular, widely read, and noted for its scholarship and credibility. The fact that the book was also translated into various European languages greatly enhanced its broad readership and wide distribution around the continent of Europe and beyond.

JUSTIFICATION FOR AFRICAN SLAVERY

Color was an instrument of justifying slavery in the Americas. The Portuguese and the Spanish were among the first to bring African slaves to the Americas. In 1542, the enslaving of indigenous Indians in its New World territories was made illegal by the government of Spain, an action that greatly expanded and facilitated the primary use of Africans in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in North America.[27] As Davis stated, "It was not until the seventeenth century that…New World slavery began to be overwhelmingly associated with people of Black African descent."[28] According to Nathan Rutstein, "In all of the original 13 colonies, there was the prevailing belief among whites that the

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[25] Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, trans. John Pory, ed. Robert Brown, 3 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1896), 97.
[26] Tom Meisenhelder, "African Bodies: 'Othering' the African in Precolonial Europe," *Race, Gender & Class*, 10:3 (2003), 103.
[27] Marable, Manning, Nishani Frazier, and John Campbell McMillian, *Freedom on My Mind: The Columbia Documentary History of the African American Experience* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003) 15.
[28] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 54.

Caucasian race was not only superior to the African races, but that Africans were part of a lower species, something between the ape and the human."[29]

It is perhaps difficult to comprehend how the United States, founded on the principles of liberty, democracy and Christian values, could establish a system as inhumane as slavery. It becomes more understandable with the historical context that Black skin and slavery were considered to be a curse from God. Although slavery was driven by economic need, race and theology were used to justify it. According to Goldenberg, the Bible was used as justification for slavery: "…the Bible…consigned blacks to everlasting servitude…[and] provided biblical validation for sustaining the slave system."[30] David Brion Davis has written extensively about the impact of the Curse of Ham on slavery and attitudes toward African Americans in the antebellum era. Davis stated that "the 'Curse of Ham' was repeatedly used as the most authoritative justification for 'Negro slavery' by nineteenth-century Southern Christians, by many Northern Christians, and even by a few Jews."[31]

HISTORICAL CHALLENGE TO ATTITUDE CHANGE

Historically, the relationship between African Americans and White Americans has been complicated and volatile. While a number of underrepresented groups in America have had their various experiences with prejudice, mistreatment, and discrimination, the African American experience has been unparalleled. The attitudes toward Blackness and African Americans that have evolved over centuries have become deeply rooted in the culture and resulted in harm all around: "it wasn't only white children who were influenced…it was drilled into the cerebrums and hearts of children of color as well, planting in them the seeds of inferiority."[32] It is doubtful that "the vast population of whites and blacks in the United States comprehends the extent to which we have been

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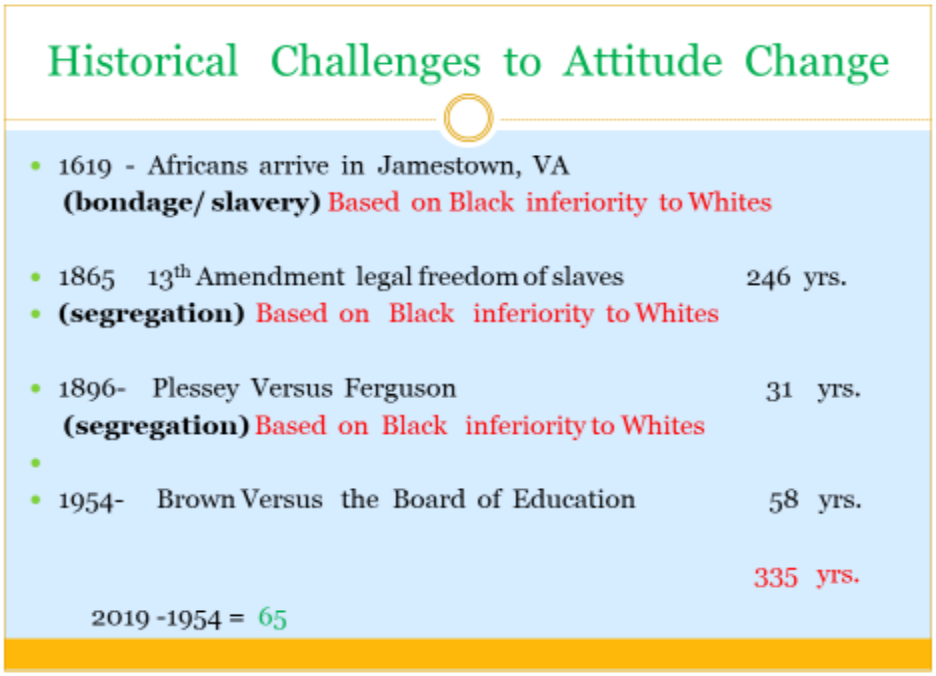
[29] Nathan Rutstein, *Racism: Unraveling the Fear*, (Washington, DC: Global Classroom, 1997), 47-48.
[30] Goldenberg, 1.
[31] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 66.
[32] Rutstein, 52.

equally affected by this extensive negative journey we have shared."[33] Europeans brought the first group of enslaved Africans to what would become the United States in 1619.[34]

Figure 4. Norman Powell, "Historical Challenges to Attitude Change," PowerPoint Presentation, 2001. In possession of author.


Historical Challenges to Attitude Change
1619 - Africans arrive in Jamestown, VA
(bondage/ slavery) Based on Black inferiority to Whites
1865 13th Amendment legal freedom of slaves 246 yrs.
(segregation) Based on Black inferiority to Whites
1896- Plessey Versus Ferguson 31 yrs.
(segregation) Based on Black inferiority to Whites
1954- Brown Versus the Board of Education 58 yrs.
335 yrs.
2019 -1954 = 65

According to Hine, Hine, and Harrold, "the precedent for enslaving Africans" was set in the British sugar colonies during the seventeenth century. An economy that initially depended on the labor of White indentured workers evolved into a system that became primarily dependent on African slave labor. This economic dynamic and demand stimulated the push for the mass enslavement of Africans.[35] From the time the first Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, until 1865, the relationship was based

[33] Norman Powell, "Confronting the Juggernaut: Establishing Pro-Diversity Initiatives at Institutions of Higher Learning," in Sherwood Thompson, ed., *Views from the Frontline: Voices of Conscience on College Campuses* (Champaign, Illinois: Common Ground Publishing, 2012) 15.
[34] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 124.
[35] Darlene Clark Hine, William C. Hine, and Stanley Harrold, *African-American History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005), 54-55.

on African inferiority to White superiority. That was a period of 246 years in which negative attitudes and practices toward African Americans became institutionalized and psychologically embedded.[36]

The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed in 1865, making slavery illegal in the nation. Segregation emerged as the public policy that continued the relationship and discriminatory practice of White superiority and Black inferiority. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* U.S. Supreme Court ruling posed a prominent legal challenge to the practice of segregation of the Black and White races. The justices of the court ruled in favor of upholding the discriminatory policy. The practice of White superiority was reaffirmed by the nation's highest court for another 58 years. In 1954, civil rights activists and other groups led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People challenged the practice of segregation in the public schools. The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court was historic. It reversed the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision and made segregation in public schools unconstitutional. *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, known for its "separate but equal" finding, laid the groundwork for future legal decisions that were to make illegal the practice of segregation in institutions throughout the nation.

From 1619 to 1954, the relationship between Blacks and Whites was based on White superiority and Black inferiority. This was the relationship between these two groups for 335 years. The critical factor that determined one's group membership was the colors of black and white. It has been only sixty-five years since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation was unconstitutional. Clearly it has been and will continue to be a formidable challenge to reverse attitudes and practices over 65 years that have been in the process of institutionalization for 335 years.

The colorism against blackness still persists. Nina G. Jablonski stated, "The single most powerful factor reinforcing the preference for lightness in the last 150 years has been the dissemination of images in the popular media."[37] For example, Josh Turner's "The Long Black Train," a popular song on country music radio that is also sung in

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[36] Rutstein, 51-52.
[37] Jablonski, 158.

churches, contains negative associations with the color black that are still widespread. The melody is beautiful, and the lyrics include spiritual references. A closer examination of the words and the messages shows that the song continues to reinforce and spread the negative connotations of the color black that began hundreds of years in the past. The song warns the listeners to stay away from and avoid that long "black" train, if they want to be saved and go to heaven. It also goes further to state that the person driving the train is the devil:

> Cling to the Father and his Holy name,
> And don't go ridin' on that long black train.
> I said cling to the Father and his Holy name,
> And don't go ridin' on that long black train.
> Yeah, watch out brother for that long black train.
> That devil's drivin' that long black train.[38]

AFRICAN AMERICAN SELF-DETERMINATION AND REJECTION OF WHITE CHARACTERIZATIONS

Lisa E. Farrington stated, "African men have been portrayed in Western high art and popular culture as brutish; African women as lewd; and for much of Western history women in general have been characterized as submissive." Farrington continues to make the point that depictions of Africans and women in Western historic records have been grossly misconstrued.[39] Since slavery was first legalized in Massachusetts in 1641, African Americans have protested and fought against racism, brutality, discrimination, and injustice. Over these many decades, countless courageous African Americans have emerged to challenge the formidable systems of institutionalized racism and flagrant

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[38] Josh Turner, "Long Black Train," track 1 on *Long Black Train* (2003; Nashville: MCA), compact disc.

[39] Lisa E. Farrington, *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African American Women Artists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

double standards. Individuals like Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Martin Luther King, Jr. waged legendary protests against racism, violence, and injustice. Each took leadership responsibility to speak truth to power, to put their lives in jeopardy, and to fight for African American legal and social liberation.

Another leader, who arose during the 1920s, a decade of rising Black Pride, was Marcus Garvey. With over one million members, Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was one of the largest Black organizations in American history. As both a Pan-African and a Christian, Garvey developed interest in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. "In addition to urging Blacks to Africanize God," writes scholar Darren Middleton, "Garvey advised all descendents of slaves brought to the New World between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries to go 'back to Africa.'"[40] An ancient work of religious art by fifteenth century Ethiopian painter Frē Seyon (see Fig. 5) exemplifies a distinctly African brand of Christianity and image of the Holy Mother and Child that attracted Garvey. Clearly, this piece is in direct contrast to the classic Greco-Roman standards and renderings of members of the Holy Family by Western Christian artists.

Figure 5. Frē Seyon, *Diptych with Mary and Her Son Flanked by Archangels*, Fifteenth Century, tempera on wood, left panel: 8 7/8" x 7 13/16" x 5/8", Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum. Accessed October 30, 2019.

[40] Darren J.N. Middleton, *Rastafari and the Arts: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 8.

https://art.thewalters.org/detail/5751/diptych-with-mary-and-her-son-flanked-by-archangels-apostles-and-a-saint/

The 1960s and the 1970s were eras of significant activism in the push for African American political, social justice, pride, and equality. Black Power and Black Nationalism contributed to the powerful sense of Black consciousness. One of the significant results of these movements was the African American acceptance of their Blackness. The color "black," which had the historic connotations of "evil" and "ugliness," was now deemed to be "beautiful." Tanisha C. Ford writes about Black college students' adoption of "soul style" during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, not only from a fashion perspective but also in a transformation in attitudes about their identity. Ford makes the point that Black college students embraced their Blackness and aimed to change the negative connotations of the color black: "Dissociating blackness from ugliness, they were actively celebrating the beauty of having dark skin and tightly coiled hair."[41] Another important impact of these movements was the African American acceptance and

[41] Tanisha C. Ford, *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 102.

identification with Africa and their African roots. There was an explosion of initiatives, activities, and projects that expressed and advocated Black pride and consciousness.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the wearing of African clothing and jewelry became very popular, and the Black Pride Movement was demonstrated and expressed in almost all aspects of daily life, from African clothing and jewelry to the "Afro" hairstyle among African Americans and even with some Whites. The 1960s and 70s in the United States, during those activist years of Black Pride and Black Power, were times when African Americans were able to make the statement that they would no longer be defined by White standards and by White culture. The rejection of White standards of beauty is a demonstration of the "Black is Beautiful" movement.[42] Carson, Lapsansky-Werner, and Nash stated it best: "Black identity was no longer imposed by a Jim Crow system, but African Americans could now choose to identify themselves with their rich history of struggles against racial barriers."[43] The success of African fashion designers, such as Yodit Eklund, suggests that Black identity and beauty standards can appeal to a global marketplace while it can also be politically and socially conscious.[44]

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on historic standards of beauty and origins of negative connotations of the colors black and white. Western beauty standards have developed over many centuries. The early Greeks and Romans played a significant role in establishing the initial standards that are still recognized throughout today's world. The African American people and their struggle for liberation have established their own standards of beauty and positive connotations for the color black. Some of the most notable conclusions about this analysis include, but are not limited to, the concept that

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[42] Ford, 98.
[43] Clayborne Carson, Emma J. Lapsansky-Werner, and Gary B. Nash, *The Struggle for Freedom: A History of African Americans*, second edition (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson, 2010), 563.
[44] Ford, 188.

beauty is a social construct. Another is that the colors black and white are also constructs with associated meanings and connotations that have been passed down for many centuries. The negative and positive connotations of these two colors have been widely spread and shared through numerous means. Powerful avenues for the universal spread of these connotations and standards have included the artistic works of classic Greco-Roman artists, biblical and other religious sources, popular music, literature, and numerous other communication means.

With the perpetual advances in media platforms and communication technology, the spreading and sharing of information continues to grow at a phenomenal level and pace. The ability to determine what information is accurate is becoming an increasingly greater challenge. The chapter has provided some history and insights into some of the powerful consequences related to associating negative and/or positive associations to people and colors. Regarding the connotations associated with the colors black and white, it is important to keep in mind that "Color is neutral. It is the mind that gives it meaning."[45]

Discussion Questions

1. Using your readings along with life experiences, describe how and why racism has continued to exist and flourish in the United States up to this time. Provide possible solutions to the problem, and evaluate whether or not it can be resolved.
2. At different points in history, how have devout Christians, Muslims, Jews, and other religious populations actively supported African slavery?
3. Consider the use of black and white as colors of everyday objects and in formal wear and discuss the implications of such color choices. For example, why is a wedding dress usually white and not black? List and analyze other common uses of the colors.

Writing Prompt

[45] Bastide, 312.

In the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* Supreme Court case, the NAACP lawyers utilized the results of an experiment in which young Black girls were asked to choose between Black and White dolls. Based on your reading, analyze how historic standards of beauty factored into the monumental decision of the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896. Using the lyrics from the song "Long Black Train," discuss and describe the use of the color black and some of the negative associations utilized with the black train metaphor that could be ascribed to African Americans in the song.

Chapter 3

Gumboot Dancing and Steppin': Origins, Parallels, and Uses in the Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

South African gumboot dancing holds similar origins and parallel characteristics with African American Steppin'. This chapter includes a brief history of South Africa as it relates to its influence on gumboot dancing along with a personal account of the author's own experience of South Africa's transition from Apartheid to Democracy. The influence of gumboot dancing on African American Steppin' is discussed in reference to overlapping styles and practices. Further discussion on the uses of these two contemporary Black cross-continental dance styles are presented as a tool for P-14 educators for exploring African music, developing culturally sensitive listeners, and connecting students with the sonic power and relevance of these unique and historically rich dance forms. An original gumboot dancing and Steppin' lesson plan that can be adapted for various ages is included toward the end of the chapter as well as a suggested list of additional resources for self-study.

A HISTORY OF GUMBOOT DANCING

The precise origins and influences of gumboot dancing are as diverse as the multitude of ethnicities that it represents. The uniquely South African contemporary dance form is more commonly known by its traditional name, *isicathulo (*phonetically pronounced ee-see-ca-too-lo) which means "shoes." The introduction of shoes by missionaries to native South Africans is a convincing interpretation of the origin of the term because precolonial dance was traditionally performed without foot wear. But the most widely

accepted birth of the term is in reference to the gumboots worn by miners in the gold and diamond mines of South Africa in the late 1800s.

In South Africa, the discovery of gold in 1886 led to significant political and economic changes in the country. Immigrants flocked to the mining areas, which produced over 25 percent of the world's gold.[1] The South African government ruled by a White minority responded to the threat of an emerging stable Black urban population by enacting the 1913 Natives Land Act, which limited the amount of land that Black people could own. Many Black people left their villages to work in the mines and since permanent urban residence was forbidden, they lived in mining bunkers returning home only at the completion of their contracts or for family events such as weddings and funerals. The mining culture was strictly governed and highly segregated. Individual ethnicities were housed within the same unit, fueling the internal division between the various races and ethnicities.

In an attempt to homogenize the wealth of cultural diversity represented by the Black male mine workers who travelled from various provinces in South Africa and neighboring countries to work in the mines, all symbols of their cultural heritage, including clothes and jewelry, were replaced with uniform overalls. Gumboots, or Wellington rainboots as they are often referred to, were issued to workers to protect their feet from the wet and potentially hazardous working conditions. The use of traditional languages was restricted in the mines, and as a means of communicating underground in the mines, workers created rhythmic patterns with their feet by stomping and slapping their gumboots.[2] This practice would usually go unnoticed by the mine bosses who vigilantly monitored miners' productivity.

Gumboot dancing evolved from its original intent of communication to a widely celebrated social dance form performed during workers' free time. Unlike many other traditional African dances, gumboot dancing includes the use of footwear. Its unique

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[1] Veit Erlmann, *African Stars: Black South African Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
[2] David Akombo, *The Unity of Music and Dance in World Cultures* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2016).

style drew from the traditional dances of the many ethnicities of miners who worked in the mines, especially in and around the city of Johannesburg. Johannesburg is commonly referred to as *Egoli,* the City of Gold because of its rich mining culture that has spanned across two centuries. Gumboot dancing soon became a blend of various tribal influences including Bhaca, Yao, Zulu, Xhosa, and many more.[3] The combined influences became a form of cultural expression as well as a symbol of solidarity between the mine workers who endured harsh working conditions under White supremacist rule.

Mining executives later began to support gumboot dancing as a form of competitive dance permitted for entertainment and recreational purposes, especially for tourists and visitors. Competitive gumboot dancing contributed significantly to the transformation of the dance style from social dancing to complex, highly structured dance routines often performed in specially created arenas. By the 1930s gumboot dancing had evolved from its original form of communication into a formal activity that shaped the shared cultural identity of various ethnic groups within the mines.

Because gumboot dancing was taught experientially through word of mouth by miners who travelled back to their communities, it lent itself to rapid evolution and continues to represent a very organic, ever changing dance style. But unlike other dance styles that are well documented, the scarcity of primary source materials documenting the evolution of gumboot dancing from its inception in the late 1800s to today has significantly influenced the limited number of published sources on the topic. And the absence of many authentic notational or video archives of traditional gumboot dancing also limits the accounts of its evolution. The earliest published works that include descriptions of gumboot dancing were recorded by Hugh Tracey, one of African music's most prolific ethnomusicologist. A British immigrant to South Africa, Tracey produced countless recordings of traditional African music dating back as far as 1929. In 1954, he founded the International Library of African Music (ILAM) in Grahamstown, South Africa, known as "one of the world's greatest repositories of African music. A

[3] *Dances of Southern Africa*, directed by Alfred Gei Zantzinger, (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology).

research institution devoted to the study of music and oral arts in Africa, it preserves thousands of historical recordings going back to 1929 and supports contemporary fieldwork."[4] According to Tracey, "Zulu men, particularly from the southern part of Natal, have developed a kind of step dance which, nowadays is performed in Wellington gumboots from which the dance derives its name."[5]

Since its first appearance in the late 1800s, gumboot dancing has evolved to include instrumental accompaniment, singing, and various modifications to boots and attire that include noise makers and other sounds. Today's gumboot dancing is still performed in gumboots and is a highly energetic, fast-paced dance form that relies heavily on synchronous foot stomping in combination with thunderous boot slapping and powerful hand clapping to create pulsating rhythms. It is an amalgamation of language, music, and dance that still continues to evolve.

The musical characteristics of gumboot dancing include inobtrusive changing meters, accents, and polyrhythms that are performed through imitation, improvisation, and call-and-response. Synchronicity, precision, and speed are the primary visual characteristics of gumboot dancing, which is always performed in dance troupes. Traditionally, gumboot dancing was a male-dominated dance form performed without instrumental accompaniment. Both traditional and contemporary gumboot dancing include multiple dancers, moving together as one, in quick response to a leader who usually calls out various commands. Improvisations by individual dancers is common practice in any gumboot dancing performance and highlights the strength and virtuosity of dancers.

Unlike the first dancers in the mines of South Africa, gumboot dancing is no longer restricted by place, purpose, or person. It can be found on school playgrounds, street corners, sports events, and concert stages around the world. It has transcended its original intent of communication to become a highly complex and appreciated dance

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[4] International Library of African Music, accessed May 15, 2019, https://www.ru.ac.za/ilam/about/.

[5] Hugh Tracey, *African Dances of the Witwatersrand Gold Mines* (Roodepoort: African Music Society, 1952), 7.

style. And it is no longer restricted to Black males and is performed by females as well as people from various races and ethnicities. Several prominent musicians including Johnny Clegg and Paul Simon have used gumboot dancing in their musical performances. The rich symbolism of gumboot dancing effectively communicates the pluralistic society from which it was born as well as the social and political changes in the country of its origin.

BRIEF HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA

A deeper understanding of the evolution of gumboot dancing and the musical traditions that surround it requires a brief contextualization of key historical, political, and social events in South Africa's history that influenced gumboot dancing's presence on the world stage today.

On April 27, 1994, I stood with my mother in the election line that wrapped around the circumference of the sports stadium near our home in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Too young to vote, I was still inherently aware of the significance of the day and the historical impact it would have on every aspect of my daily life in South Africa. On May 10, 1994, Nelson Mandela (known by his native name, Madiba, "father") was sworn in as South Africa's first Black president and so began the transition from apartheid to a fully democratic government. The years following would bring remarkable change both to the social landscape and political climate of the country. Racial reconciliation from the previous apartheid regime was seen in every aspect of South African life, especially the arts. At the grassroots level, for me as a White middle-class South African girl, I would share a school desk with students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds for the first time. I would learn native languages unfamiliar to my colonial English ear and I would be exposed to music and dance that would give birth to a new coterie of styles and rhythms.

Years later, as a first-year music teacher, I was challenged by the high school general music curriculum to include gumboot dancing in my instruction. My post-apartheid college music education saw significant revision to all content areas, but

music education still centered around Western art forms with little preparation to teach traditional African music to my diverse student population. So, I did what any good teacher would do: I took to the streets of my hometown to observe and document gumboot dancing in its authentic and varied settings, and my interest began to flourish. It would be another ten years, my departure from South Africa to the United States, and my observance of African American Steppin' before I began to make clear musical, visual, and historical connections between gumboot dancing and Steppin'.

In many ways, gumboot dancing was a symbol of and foreshadowing for Apartheid, a system of oppressive racial segregation implemented between 1948 and 1994 in South Africa by the ethnic White minority who ruled over the Black majority with fear and tyranny. Early Gumboot Dancing represented the defiance of Black people over White totalitarian rule. The forceful movements of dancers exemplified Black South Africans' fight for equal rights and cultural identity. Contemporary gumboot dancing now serves as a visual historical representation of the oppressive reality of Black South Africans' daily lives during their struggle for democracy and highlights the reconciliation of ethnic groups and crossing of cultural barriers established by political and social constructs.

For almost fifty years, apartheid succeeded in separating Blacks and Whites in almost every aspect of life. During this time, many White South Africans were unaware of the rich tradition of African music and dance largely because of the system of education that was in place. The unequal and divided system of education consisted of different education departments separated according to race, geography, and ideology, enhancing the indoctrination of White superiority over Blacks. Education was used as a tool for strengthening divisions within society during apartheid. No indigenous musical arts were included in any White school content areas. In Black schools, English was used as the primary vehicle of education, neglecting the many native languages spoken across the country and marginalizing indigenous tongues. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 reinforced inequalities by restricting knowledge and controlling intellectual development of Black children to ensure subordination through separate education systems, which included the abolishment of traditional cultural practices such as song

and dance in the curriculum. Gumboot dancing was restricted to informal settlements called "townships," the playgrounds of Black schools, and with permission, in White areas like concert halls.

The implementation of economic sanctions on South Africa in the mid 1980s by foreign countries including the USA was successful in fueling the uprising to pressure the South African government to end apartheid. But sanctions had far-reaching consequences, including a resolution by the United Nations (UN) for "all writers, musicians and other personalities to boycott" South Africa. This formal recommendation continued the limited exposure of gumboot dancing with one exception, Paul Simon's *Graceland* album. Paul Simon violated the UN's cultural boycott of South Africa when he collaborated with South African musicians and recorded parts of his album in Johannesburg in 1985. The cross-cultural experimental album was a true synthesis of American and South African cultures that rejoined American music with its roots.[6] Many controversies surrounded the album's creation, but its release in 1986 and its success in elevating South African music and dance to the world stage is unquestionable.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from Robben Island prison where he spent eighteen of his 27-year sentence as a political prisoner of anti-apartheid. This event was the beginning of a new democratic South Africa that symbolized the end of apartheid and opened doors for the arts, including the exposure of gumboot dancing, such as the 1994 visit by steppers from Alpha Phi Alpha Inc. to the Soweto Dance Theater in Johannesburg. The birth of South Africa's democracy began with several key legal and symbolic transformations. The first was the creation of a new Constitution approved by the highest court in the land, the Constitutional Court on December 4, 1996.[7] Prior to 1996, South Africa had adopted three previous constitutions, all of which discriminated and oppressed Black South Africans by denying them basic rights such as the right to vote. The South African Constitution includes a comprehensive list of enumerated rights governed through a parliamentary structure that allocates powers to

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[6] *Under African Skies*, directed by Joe Berlinger (A&E Television Network, 2011).
[7] South African Government, accessed May 30, 2019, https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996.

provincial governments as well as a Constitutional court with eleven appointed non-renewable Justices. As can be expected from a country that suffered almost fifty years of racial oppression, human rights are given prominence in the Constitution. The Constitution includes the Bill of Rights, which states that every South African citizen has the inalienable right to life, equality, human dignity, and privacy.

Symbolic transformations included the 1994 adoption of a new national flag and national anthem. As a symbol of democracy and equality, the new flag included six primary colors which began as two paths that converge into one to form a "V" shape. This symbol of unity represents the merging of many aspects of South Africa, including the adoption of eleven official languages, the recognitions and freedom of religion, and unity of the "rainbow nation" which is commonly used to refer to the immense diversity of cultures and traditions in South Africa. In the same year, President Nelson Mandela proclaimed the combination of two songs as the national anthem of the "new" South Africa. The songs included "*Nkosi Sekelel' iAfrika,"* written in 1897 by Black composer, Enoch Sontonga. The song was originally used as a church hymn but would later be recognized as a song of political defiance against the apartheid government. The second song was "The Call of South Africa" written by C.J. Langenhoven in 1918. The combined songs represent five of South Africa's eleven national languages, namely Xhosa, Zulu, Sesotho, Afrikaans, and English.

Lyrics	**Language**	**English Translation**
Nkosi sikelel' Afrika	Xhosa, Zulu	Lord bless Africa
Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo,		May her glory be lifted high
Yizwa imithandazo yethu, Nkosi		Hear our petitions
sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.		Lord bless us, your children
Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso,	Sesotho	Lord we ask You to protect our
O fedise dintwa le		nation
matshwenyeho,		Intervene and end all conflicts
O se boloke, O se boloke		Protect us, protect our nation

setjhaba sa heso,		Protect South Africa, South Africa
Setjhaba sa South Afrika - South Afrika		
Uit die blou van onse hemel,	Afrikaans	Out of the blue of our heavens
Uit die diepte van ons see,		Out of the depths of our seas
Oor ons ewige gebergtes,		Over our everlasting mountains
Waar die kranse antwoord gee,		Where the echoing crags resound
Sounds the call to come together,	English	
And united we shall stand,		
Let us live and strive for freedom,		
In South Africa our land.		

The national anthem of South Africa in many ways mirrors the unique transformations of the country. Not only does the anthem combine two different songs and contain five languages, but it also begins in one melodic key and ends in another. The combination of these distinct characteristics along with the anthem's relatable pulse, alacritous tempo, unique history, and compassionate birth have afforded it much international recognition including *The Economist*'s Best National Anthem in the World award in 2017. Many of these characteristics can be seen in gumboot dancing that commonly uses different languages, includes a variety of ethnic references in its dance sequences, and epitomizes the African spirit of *Ubuntu,* which means "togetherness."

One of the many contributing factors of gumboot dancing's continued exposure and prominence in South African dance culture is its significant presence in the cultural landscape of the country. Gumboot dancing can be found in all walks of life, including education. Post-apartheid education saw significant revisions along with an emphasis on traditional music and dance in schools. An Outcomes Based Education System focused

on interculturalism with the premises that 1) intercultural relations are better when people are introduced to each other's cultures in schools, and 2) education is better when presented from various perspectives, derived from culturally different social groups.[8] The fundamentals of education aligned with the societal values, roles, and responsibilities as stated in the new Constitution, such as the right to basic education, the right of equal access to education institutions, the right to choose the language of instruction.

Even though many of us (teachers) were schooled in early post-apartheid South Africa, our first exposures to many indigenous art forms was out of necessity to teach it as part of the prescribed curriculum. In many cases, our students knew more than us. We relied on a combination of teacher-led research and student-based experience to explore indigenous music and dance. We made connections with similar dance forms from popular culture, including Steppin', to help guide our own education.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE ORIGINS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STEPPIN'

A complete historical overview of Steppin' expands beyond the boundaries of this chapter, but the roots of Steppin' have held claims to a variety of influences such as traditional African dance, tap dance, military behaviors, and gumboot dancing. The most widely documented birth of Steppin' is from the founding Black African American Greek fraternities and sororities originating predominantly out of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) but also found at some predominantly White universities in the 1920s. According to Carol Branch, the first African American Black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Inc., "trace their style of stepping to the boot dancers of South Africa…stepping is a way of honoring their African brothers who struggled under

[8] Francis Ryan, "The Perils of Multiculturalism: Schooling for the Group," *Educational Horizons*, 71:3 (Spring 1993), 134-138.

European domination."[9] The Alphas of Howard University visited Johannesburg in South Africa on two separate documented trips. The first was in the 1960s when cultural exchanges included presentations of gumboot dancing.[10] The second was in 1994 when steppers shared their dance skills with the Soweto Dance Theater. They in turn gave lessons in gumboot dancing to members of the Alphas.

Alpha Phi Alpha Inc. was established in 1906 at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.[11] Alpha Phi Alpha Inc. is historically the most widely respected Black fraternity. Well-known members include Martin Luther King Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Bishop John Hurst Adams, Jesse Owens, and Duke Ellington. They are overseen by the collaborative organization that includes nine International Greek fraternities and sororities, the National Pan-Hellenic Council. In 1908, Howard University in Washington, D.C, followed suit by establishing several other fraternities including Alpha Kappa Alpha Inc., the first Black women's intercollegiate Greek organization founded at a Black university. Among the membership of Alpha Kappa Alpha are Edwidge Danticat, Kamala Harris, Toni Morrison, Phylicia Rashad, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Wanda Sykes.[12]

Since their inceptions, most Black fraternities and sororities have held a long tradition of Steppin' that has expanded to include national conferences and international competitions such as the National Step League. Steppin', also known as "blocking," "hopping," or "yard steppin'," was often performed at universities in centrally located areas accessible and visible to students. The earliest documented account of "Yard Steppin'" dates back to the 1930s when it was often used as a vehicle for protest, especially during segregation, as well as a recruiting tool and point of pride for members. Black Hawk Hancock states that "African American reliance on the body as a

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[9] Carol Branch, *Steppin' Through these Hallowed Halls: Performance in African American Fraternities* (PhD dissertation: University of California Los Angeles, 2001), 134.
[10] Branch, *Steppin' Through these Hallowed Halls*, 161.
[11] Lawrence Ross, *The Divine Nine: The History of African American Fraternities and Sororities* (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2000).
[12] "Notable Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha" accessed July 10, 2019, https://www.theroot.com/notable-members-of-alpha-kappa-alpha-1790874163

means of expression has a long history tied to racism and economic impoverishment."[13] Steppin' has historically also been used as a sonic guise for the freedom of expression. Today, Steppin' is an important part of many fraternity and sorority pledging rituals, often requiring members to learn intricate signature steps representative of the fraternity or sorority's rich history. Today's Steppin' is most often found at college homecomings and step competitions. Steppin' is a fast, complex, and powerful ritual performance of group identity that demonstrates both history and innovation and combines a variety of dance styles and music alongside traditional signature steps.[14]

The historical and innovative nature of gumboot dancing and Steppin' are recognized by many American choreographers who acknowledge the significant contributions of the African diaspora. The 1960s Black Arts Movement category, "Black Dance," includes a blend of traditional styles alongside contemporary expressive movements which contribute significantly to the culture of dance in America today. Angela Fatou Gittens asserts, "With more awareness of the specific historical background of cultural symbols, traditional dances, music styles, and other types of visual expressivity, African Americans feel more empowered and connected to their African heritage as they make knowledgeable choices to create new versions and fusions of expressive forms based on African traditions."[15] Examples can be found in the educational paths that Steppin' provides as seen with the non-profit organization StepAfrika!, the "first professional company in the world dedicated to the tradition of stepping."[16] Founded in 1994, the company educates its audience on the historical roots of Steppin' with a focus on teamwork and cross-cultural understanding that includes the variety of influences, including Gumboot dancing.

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[13] Black Hawk Hancock, "Steppin' Out of Whiteness," *Ethnography*, 6:4 (2005), 427-461.
[14] Elizabeth Fine, *Soulstepping: African American Step Shows* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).
[15] Angela Fatou Gittens, "Black Dance and the Fight for Flight: *Sabar* and the Transformation and Cultural Significance of Dance from West Africa to Black America 1960-2010," *Journal of Black Studies,* 43:1 (2012), 49-71.
[16] Step Afrika, accessed June 18, 2019, https://www.stepafrika.org/company/what-is-stepping/.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN GUMBOOT DANCING AND STEPPIN'

Portia Maultsby states, "Black people create, interpret, and experience music out of an African frame of reference—one that shapes musical sound, interpretation, and behavior and makes Black music traditions throughout the world a unified whole."[17] Like most other dance styles, neither Steppin' nor gumboot dancing is confined to one primary influence, and limited scholarly works have been published on their evolution. However, many key elements of both dance styles share stylistic features and practices that often make them indistinguishable from each other in performance. The highly rhythmic regimentality of their routines makes it difficult not to see parallels between the two dance styles or to draw conclusions on the comparisons between their musical, visual, and political characteristics.

- **Origins**

African American Steppin' is highly influenced by traditional Subsaharan African dance styles brought to the United States through the Midatlantic Slave Trade. References to this heritage are often explicitly mentioned in step routines, and symbols of Africanism appear in colors, costumes, words, and step names such as Phi Beta Sigma's signature step, "African Step." Some say that the emphasis of rhythmic movement in Steppin' instead of rhythmic drumming was a carryover from the Black slave tradition that maintained traditional tribal rhythms out of necessity because they lacked traditional instruments such as drums. Similarly, the rhythmic movements of gumboot dancing are an amalgamation of various Subsaharan tribal dances that grew out of a need for miners from different tribes to communicate with each other while still maintaining their tribal roots and traditions of music and dance. Gumboot dancing was

[17] Portia Maultsby, "Africanism in African American Music," in Joseph Holloway, *Africanisms in American Culture*, 2nd edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 185-210.

a unifying practice for Black South African miners who had to navigate the tribal diversities of their coworkers as well as the oppressive practices of the mining executives. Similarly, Black Greek fraternities resorted to Steppin' as a "mutual support vehicle for Black students who found themselves ostracized and discriminated against in a predominantly White environment."[18]

Originally, both dance styles were performed primarily by male dancers. But today, these dance styles are not restricted by gender. Gumboot dancing and Steppin' also share the uniqueness of their original performance spaces. Because both styles were essentially banned at their inception[19], their performance space did not resemble those of other dance styles of the times, which usually included a raised platform and seated spaces for audiences. Unlike more traditional performance stages which both contemporary dance forms utilize today especially in competitions, Gumboot dancing and Steppin' were performed using available space that was rarely elevated and provided a close connection with the audience. In the early gumboot dancing traditions of South African miners, the competitive performance spaces were usually available open spaces presented as makeshift arenas sponsored and controlled by the mining executives. Similarly, Steppin' utilized available spaces on campus, such as the quadrangle at Howard University in the mid-1920s favorably referred to as "the Yard."

Steps are learned through oral transmission for both styles. In Steppin' the "step master" usually takes the lead in teaching step routines to pledging members of fraternities and sororities. In gumboot dancing, routines were transferred from the mines to the communities of the miners who lived there. Because of this extension and many other factors, both dance styles have absorbed a variety of influences and are very organic by their very nature. According to Tara Firenzi, "within indigenous African

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[18] Jacqui Malone, *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

[19] Dancing was prohibited by many administrators during the early years of Black college development (see Malone, *Steppin' on the Blues*, 197).

communities…dance is often based on one's place in the social hierarchy." This sense of status is often represented in both dance styles also.[20]

- **Movements and Performance**

The movement and performance routines of both dance styles are strikingly similar. Both rely on fast, complex foot work and both were traditionally unaccompanied practices. A step show typically includes an introduction, body, and exit. The introduction is meant to rally the audience, whose participation is integral to the success of the performance. It can also include a skit that represents the theme of their performance as well as various talking sections. The body consists of various choreographed and improvised sequences, and a powerful exit is usually designed to encourage arising applause. Similarly, gumboot dancing relies on strong movements that set the tone for the performance and engage the audience in a rhythmic exploration of history. Several unique exceptions to the similarities between step styles occur in Steppin' as used in children's handclapping games in some earlier sorority step routines as well as contemporary inclusion of Steppin in' pop music dance routines.[21]

In both dance styles, the formation of long sets and circles are common practice. Both dance styles use the circle as a means of audience participation, especially in earlier performances in "the yard" and mining communities. Early gumboot dancers in the Witwatersrand are photographed in arenas where the audience circles the performers.[22] Similarly, yard steppin' has been documented in early records at Howard University where students perform in an audience-created circle or enter/exit from a circle.

The synchronized performance movements of Steppin' differentiate from the casual spontaneous step movements exercised in social settings. The latter is often referred to as *yard steppin'* while the former is called *Show Steppin':* Similarly, gumboot

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[20] Tara Firenzi, "The Changing Functions of Traditional Dance in Zulu Society: 1830-Present," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 45:3 (2012), 403-425.
[21] Elizabeth Fine, "Stepping, Saluting, Cracking, and Freaking: The Cultural Politics of African American Step Shows," *The Drama Review*, 25:2 (Summer 1991), 39-59.
[22] Tracey, *African Dances of the Witwatersrand Gold Mines*, 7.

dancing is used as a form of solidarity and social dance in many settings that may appear less synchronized or mastered than the performance versions of the same style. The rapid evolution of both dance styles is highly attributable to its competitive nature, which lends itself to constant change and innovation.

Both dance styles flourished with the encouragement of competition, especially when cash awards were presented. Mining executives encouraged gumboot dance competitions that included prizes of food incentives and later monetary awards. Steppin' also gained its competitive edge with the first syndicated stepping competition in 1992, S.T.O.M.P.

- **Sound Color**

Both dance styles rely on a variety of sound colors to connect with their audience. Although Steppin' has evolved to include more speech patterns and musical accompaniment, like gumboot dancing, it still relies primarily on the sound color produced by the body. The dark sounds of powerful stomps produced by shoes on hard surfaces contrast with the color variations produced by crisp thigh slapping, hand clapping, and chest thumping. Individual and paired hand clapping includes complex forehand and back hand motions, and the chest is also a percussive device that provides a darker sound to contrasts the sharpness of hand clapping or finger snapping. Gumboot dancing has expanded its sonic repertoire by including the addition of makeshift rattles and shakers tied to the ankles of boots. Similarly, some fraternities and sororities use white canes in their signature steps that enhance the variety of available sound color.

- **Communication**

The speech patterns in both dance styles are predominantly used by the leader of the group. Gumboot dancing calls usually focus on the upcoming dance sequence such as those heard when the leader calls for *singles,* which prompts individual dancers to improvise movements as a solo performance. Many other calls such as *Bopha, Voetsak,* and *Aiya* indicate the proceeding dance sequence. The origins of these words are attributed to the mining language of *fanakalo,* a combination of various languages and

original words that created a unique language and allowed mining executives to communicate on a basic level with miners.[23] The gumboot equivalent of *singles* in Steppin' is called *freakin'.* Freakin' is rarely used as a call but rather as a description of improvisational skills. In Steppin', the contrasting terms *cracking* and *saluting* are commonly heard. Cracking was used as ritualized insults and referred to movements that were meant to demean a group; cracking is no longer permitted. Saluting, on the contrary, pays tribute to a group and symbolizes respect.

- **Call-and-Response**

Call-and-response is a musical technique rooted deep in sub-Saharan African music. Its use in Western music appears in various styles such as jazz and hip hop. Call-and-response in gumboot dancing and Steppin' is integral to a performance during which the leader calls, either verbally or through rhythmic movement, and the group responds. The response can be an exact repetition of the call or it can vary from the call. Call-and-response provides the foundation for improvisation, which is a cornerstone of both dance styles. Call-and-response often includes audience response.

- **Polyrhythms and Syncopations**

Polyrhythms and syncopations are common practice in traditional African music. Both dance styles at various times during their performance will utilize these rhythmic features. Polyrhythm, or many rhythms sounding at the same time, adds to the tension of a dance sequence while syncopations, playing off the beat, add to the complexity of the routine. Polyrhythms in Steppin' usually involve canes, with dancers performing one rhythm with the cane while they employ another rhythm with their feet. Similarly, a small group of gumboot dancers will perform one rhythm while another rhythm is layered on top. Incredible skill is required to perform contrasting rhythms at the same time whether by individuals or between groups.

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[23] Carol Muller and Janet Topp Fargion, "Gumboots, Bhaca Migrants, and Fred Astaire: South African Worker Dance and Musical Style," *African Music*, 7:4 (1999), 88-109.

- **Emphasis on Individuality**

Both gumboot dancing and Steppin' rely on dance troupes to emphasize their individuality, which manifests in two ways: individual improvisations and group individuality. Although both styles of dance rely heavily on the synchronicity of its dancers, they do not deny the virtuosic talents of individuals, and individual improvisations are common practice. The emphasis on individuality is also seen between dance troupes, especially between fraternities and sororities who include signature steps that identify one group from another. Individuality and the need to constantly create new steps has contributed significantly to the constant creation of new ideas either through synchronous choreography, individual improvisations, or inclusion of props, songs.

- **Audience Participation**

Contemporary gumboot dancing and Steppin' are most commonly choreographed and performed for an audience. But traditionally, both dance styles were not created with an audience in mind. Fraternity and sororities performed steps for each other as a form of camaraderie, and gumboot dancing was a means of connection and communication between miners. Although Steppin' has evolved to rely heavily on group discourse in today's performances, the routines of both dance styles include carefully placed steps that aim to elicit audience responses and participation for successful performance. Both gumboot dancing and Steppin' have also grown beyond the audience to include education in their performing repertoire. Non-profit organizations have used the dance styles to mentor troubled youth.

GUMBOOT DANCING AND STEPPIN' AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE LISTENERS

South African gumboot dancing and African American Steppin' are both current, authentic vehicles for teaching students of all ages about the historical, societal, and

aesthetic values of their relevant countries. Because both dance styles were born from the perils of racial discrimination and flourished because of the shared struggles of Black people, they present a unique connection that crosses geographical, ethnic, and racial boundaries and can be used as a creative and tactile medium for learning. But aside from the historical significance of these dances, gumboot dancing and Steppin' also serve as a gateway for the exploration of cultural diversity in general because they are examples of the positive impact of cultural diversity on various mediums, especially the arts.

The United States is home to descendants from many African countries, and the influence of African music is present in many American musical genres. Exploring the visual and sonic experiences of traditional and contemporary African music like gumboot dancing is an accessible and culturally responsive tool for discussing diversity with students. The inclusion of music from various African countries, religions, and traditions especially when they represent the heritage of students in your own classroom is a culturally responsive teaching approach that provides an aural and kinesthetic experience of the rich diversity that surrounds us as well as an opportunity to reflect on our own cultural identifiers and shared cultural values. Experiencing gumboot dancing and African American Steppin' is an opportunity to connect with individual students' roots and to explore cultural diversity by developing culturally sensitive listeners who appreciate things that look and sound different. Instruction that includes active participation in these styles of dance is an effective way for students to diversify their musical repertoire and for teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching approaches. Culturally responsive teaching implements equitable practices in the areas of gender, race, and cultural diversity and provides opportunities for consideration of different opinions and viewpoints (Mason, 2019). Instead of focusing on the differences between race, ethnicity, and culture, these dance forms cross geographical borders to highlight the connection of humanity and the importance of music and dance in our shared lived experiences.

Research has documented the value of movement in the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of all children. Dance allows us to feel what we

hear and hear what we feel. Whether or not an individual has maintained their childhood comfort level with movement into adulthood or not, we can all appreciate the beauty of music and movement and its ability to communicate and inspire. Following is an original instructional lesson that includes gumboot dancing and Steppin' and can be adapted for any age.

GUMBOOT DANCING AND STEPPIN' LESSON

Objective and Activity 1: Students will explore gumboot dancing by watching and listening to authentic examples using the list of recommended resources or other online sources. Students will be able to identify the primary steps in gumboot dancing, including step, stomp, slap, clap.

Objective and Activity 2: Students will discuss the origins of gumboot dancing under the following headings:

- Language diversity: Students will list the most commonly spoken languages spoken in South Africa and explore how gumboot dancing was a way for miners to talk without language as a type of Morse code to communicate secretively in the mines.
- Communication: Students will experience the many languages spoken in South Africa by using common greetings such as *hello* in Xhosa (*Molo),* Zulu *(Sawubona)*, Shona (*Mhoro)*, and Swahili (*Jambo)*.
- Unity: Students will discuss how dancing as a collaborative form of expression served as an act of solidarity between workers in the mines who represented many different ethnic groups. Students will analyze how the synchronous movements of the dancers developed a shared love of music and dance.

Objective and Activity 3: After dividing into pairs, students will take turns to create their own rhythmic patterns through the primary steps of gumboot dancing (step, stomp, slap, clap).

Objective and Activity 4: Students will discuss the background of "*Shosholoza*," a song that has served as a symbol of freedom from oppression for over 100 years in South Africa. Today, it is considered the country's second national anthem and is performed at various events, including sporting events and concert halls. The lyrics include a mixture of Zulu and Ndebele words (two of South Africa's eleven official languages). It is often performed in unison or as a call-and-response. The translation begins with onomatopoeia of the steam train ("*Shosho*"). The lyrics loosely translate to "Move fast, make way! Here comes the steam train. From far away mountains, the train comes to South Africa." The lyrics represent the journey by steam train for many tribesmen to the diamond and gold mines of South Africa. The anthem was also used by many as a traditional work song, lending synchronicity among workers and commonly sung with accompanying gumboot dancing.

After learning the historical background of the traditional South African song "*Shosholoza,*" students will be able to compare and contrast differences between an ensemble performance and a call-and-response version; identify the lyrical device of onomatopoeia and the rhythm of mine work; explain the historical components within the lyrics; and analyze the song's ability to unify individuals into a group.

Shosholoza
Traditional
Call
Sho - sho - lo - za
ku - le - zo nta - a - ba
Response
Sho - sho - lo - za
Sti - me - la Sti - me - la.
Wen' u - ya - ba - le - e - ka
ku - le - zo nta - a - ba
Wen' u - ya - ba - le - e - ka
Sti - me - la si - phu - m' South A - fri - ca.

Objective and Activity 5: While singing "*Shosholoza*," students will participate in an accessible gumboot dance routine.

1. Requirements: Students are encouraged to wear gumboots and to use noise makers such as plastic bags, bubble wrap or shakers tied around the boot for additional sound colors.
2. Actions: Bend at the knee
   Use small steps
   Variety of stomp dynamics including single/double stomps
   Slap the boot at the ankle with open hand
   Include claps, jumps, and turns

Objective and Activity 6: Students will read Alexandra Pajak's poem "An African American Step Show"[24] and discuss the reference to South Africa and the poem's ties to both Steppin' and African music:

Thirteen approach the stage dressed as fat policemen.
Teeth of plastic, some incisors "knocked" out,
Afro wigs like black galaxies spinning
Into the gym's rusting bleachers and five hundred faces.
Sauntering onto stage then into single file.

Militaristic. Bold. Right.

[Stomp] Alpha! [Stomp] Phi! [Stomp] Alpha! [Cheers] [Stomp]
Strip their stuffed costumes, swing those plastic smiles
Behind them. The wigs slide slowly off, peel
As—[Stomp] Ladies...! [Stomp] Ladies...! [Stomp]
Air swallows sweat, dimness a dirge. [Stomp]
The wooden platform is a shadow, shoes
Step on South African soil. [Stomp] [Stomp] [Stomp]

[24] Alexandra Pajak, "An African American Step Show," *North American Review*, 297:2 (Spring 2012), 12.

Gumboot miners of the darkened heart
Dance tonight, today's shells, ancient souls.
Straight line proclaiming a swelling pride.
The heavy bass of the speakers blare
The King's heartbeat:
We here. We now. We Step.

Objective and Activity 7: Students will discuss the African American tradition of Steppin' after screening authentic examples of African American Steppin' from the list of recommended resources or other online sources. They will compare and contrast the physical movements and historical origins of Steppin' and gumboot dancing.

RESOURCES

Countless video and audio sources are available for teachers who wish to explore the dance styles of gumboot dancing and Steppin' for various culturally relevant topics in the classroom. The Putumayo Kids Series serves as a good introduction to the unique musical colors, styles, and rhythms of African and South African music and includes *African Playground*, *African Dreamland*, and *South Africa*.[25] The sounds of LadySmith Black Mambazo, the Soweto Gospel Choir, Hugh Masekela, Johnny Clegg, The Black Umfolosi 5, or Paul Simon's *Graceland* album will provide a strong rhythmic base for accompanying gumboot dancing. [26] Limited notation of gumboot dancing can be found in scholarly articles including "The Diversity of African Musics: Zulu Kings, Xhosa Clicks, and Gumboot Dancing in South Africa," "Gumboot Dancing: An Introduction," and "A Preliminary Study of Gumboot Dance."[27] The online repositories of Smithsonian

[25] Putumayo Kids, *African Playground* (CD, 2003); Putumayo Kids, *African Dreamland* (CD, 2008); Putumayo Kids, *South Africa* (CD, 2010).
[26] Paul Simon, *Graceland* (CD, Warner Brother, 1986).
[27] Nicola Mason, "The Diversity of African Musics: Zulu Kings, Xhosa Clicks, and Gumboot Dancing in South Africa," *General Music Today*, 27:2 (2014), 35-50; Janice Evans, "Gumboot Dancing: An Introduction," *Orff Beat*, 39 (2010), 19-20; Carol Ann

Folkways Recordings and the International Library of African Music contain accessible and authentic audio sources for gumboot dancing. *Understanding African Music* is designed for high school and introductory level college students who want to learn about the fundamentals of African music that includes gumboot dancing.[28] Documentaries abound that highlight the historical and stylistic features of gumboot dancing include *Stomp it Out!, Gumboots, Gumboot Dancers of South Africa, Dances of Southern Africa,* and countless YouTube instructional videos highlighting the versatility of the dance style. [29]

Steppin' saw its debut in cinematography with Spike Lee's 1988 movie *School Daze.* Since then many contemporary movies have included Steppin' as a backdrop to their stories including *Mac and Me* (1988), *Drumline* (2002), *How She Move* (2007), *Stomp the Yard* (2007), *Step Sisters* (2018), and various *Sesame Street* episodes.[30] Documentaries provide both an historical and culturally authentic story, such as in *Stepping* (1998) and *Step* (2017).[31] The most extensive publications on Steppin' include *Soulstepping: African American Step Shows* (2003), "Steppin' through These Hallowed Halls" (2001), and *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American*

Muller and Janet Topp, *A Preliminary Study of Gumboot Dance* (Honors Thesis: University of Natal, Durban, 1985).

[28] Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, accessed June 18, 2019, https://folkways.si.edu; International Library of African Music, accessed June 18, 2019, https://www.ru.ac.za/ilam; Mandy Carver, *Understanding African Music* (Grahamstown, International Library of African Music, 2012).

[29] *Stomp it Out*, directed by Rachel Dickinson (2014); *Gumboots*, directed by Bauke Brouwer (2012); *Gumboot Dancers in South Africa*, directed by Sipho Mpongo (2017); *Dances of Southern Africa*, directed by Alfred Gei Zantzinger, (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology).

[30] *Step Sisters*, directed by Chares Stone III (Los Angeles Media Fund, 2018); *Stomp the Yard*, directed by Sylvain White (Screen Gems, 2007); *Mac and Me*, directed by Stewart Raffill (Orion Pictures, 1988); *Drumline*, directed by Charles Stone III (20th Century Fox, 2002); *How She Move*, directed by Ian Iqbal Rashid (Paramount Vantage, 2007); "Sesame Street: Steppin'," (Sesame Street, 2011).

[31] *Step*, directed by Amanda Lipitz (Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2017); *Stepping*, directed by Tom Mould (Folkstreams, 1998).

Dance (1996).[32] Stepping has been used as a platform for education as seen in The Art of Stepping (AOS), a unique "privately held educational services firm that provides curriculum, educational & enrichment STEAM focused programs… AOS programs mainly help academicians, educators, parents and program participants get excited about STEAM learning by teaching them how to create & perform their own personalized Step & Dance choreography."[33]

CONCLUSION

Cross-cultural comparisons of the performance influences of South African gumboot dancing and African American Steppin' are a historically rich means of exploring political and social histories. The deep historical significance of communal music-making among Africans and African Americans as well as the ethnic distinctiveness of the movements, music, and symbolism also connect gumboot dancing and Steppin' on philosophical levels. Unlike many other dance forms that serve as a resource for distinguishing one ethnic group from another, the origins of both gumboot dancing and Steppin' highlight the reconciliation of ethnic groups as well as serve a symbolic reminder of past discriminations. Both dance forms have transcended their original intent of communication and solidarity to shape the shared cultural memory and identity of various ethnic and racial groups. Both styles of dance inherently cross cultural barriers established by past political and social constructs and are wildly accepted popular dance forms that serve to unite and educate through music and movement.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the traditional African name for gumboot dancing? What does it mean? How does this name represent the historical origins of gumboot dancing?

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[32] Fine, *Soulstepping*; Branch, *Steppin' Through these Hallowed Halls*; Malone, *Steppin' on the Blues*.

[33] Art of Stepping, accessed on June 1, 2019, http://www.artofstepping.com.

2. What other names are often used in reference to Steppin'? How do these names represent the historical origins of Steppin'?
3. "Gumboot dancing and Steppin' are no longer restricted by place, purpose, or person." What are the places, purposes, and persons referred to in this statement?
4. Discuss ways that learning about gumboot dancing and Steppin' in the classroom can assist in developing cultural sensitivity in students.

Writing Prompt

Are South African gumboot dancing and African American Steppin' homogenous or diverse dance styles? Why or why not? Consider their traditional origins and contemporary applications. Provide supporting evidence for your opinion. Select one audio or visual example for gumboot dancing and Steppin' from the list of recommended sources or online sources. Analyze the sounds and steps using the five categories of movements, sound color, costumes, call-and-response, and polyrhythms and provide your own analysis for both dance styles.

Chapter 4

"The Strong Cords of Affection": Enslaved African American Families and Escape to the U.S. North and Canada, 1800-1861

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INTRODUCTION

During the antebellum era in the U.S., enslaved African Americans escaped from their Southern White enslavers in search of freedom and security. Self-emancipated men, women, and children sought refuge in urban centers across the South while others fled to Mexico to claim political asylum. Thousands of enslaved African Americans in the Upper South escaped to the Northern "free" states and Upper Canada (roughly present-day southwestern Ontario). Tens of thousands of self-emancipated refugees sought "free soil" spaces, or those states and territories which gradually abolished Black enslavement over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[1]

While most freedom seekers fled alone, many enslaved African Americans attempted to escape with their parents, spouses, and children. Some fled as a complete family unit while others embraced loose forms of chain migration. To avoid detection, family members fled in stages with the goal of reuniting later. Some refugee families received assistance from African Americans and White abolitionists in the North. Historians often conceptualize self-emancipation as a solitary affair; yet, this was often not the case. Eric Foner argues that more slave refugees passed through New York City "in groups than on their own." Family bonds often formed the basis of refugee migratory units.[2]

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[1] Rachel Adams, *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 61-99.
[2] Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 205.

However, self-emancipation and escape also came with significant hardships that challenged family bonds. As Sydney Nathans notes, all Black freedom seekers "left family members behind." For many, the loss of family via flight proved a tremendous source of anguish. While most refugees from slavery resigned themselves to the fact that they would likely never see their families again, others attempted to liberate or rescue enslaved loved ones. In some cases, refugees succeeded in reuniting with their families.[3]

The relationship between family, self-emancipation, and escape to the North and Canada was a dynamic one. The fear of permanent family separation was one of the primary motivations behind self-emancipation for many enslaved African Americans, and many freedom seekers attempted to escape with their families. For Black freedom seekers following their escape from the South, writes Karolyn Smardz Frost, "the only story usually told of them is that of their flight." After their escapes from bondage, Black freedom seekers pursued efforts to maintain their kinship networks.[4]

A BRIEF NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

As noted by the National Park Service, terms such as "runaway," "fugitive," or "escapee" are "constructs of the Southern slave-holding societal structure… As such, these terms tend to reflect how slave-holding society viewed African American efforts toward freedom." Instead, terms like "freedom seeker," "refugee," "self-emancipator," and "self-liberator" convey agency rather than Southern laws. Furthermore, "enslaved people" is a better description for people than "slaves" because, as Frost argues, "Slavery is a condition imposed on people; they may be *enslaved*, but no one is ever a slave." Similarly, the term "enslaver" is preferred over "slaveholder" or "slave owner." Other descriptors include "Black," "people of color," and "people of African descent." Finally, references to "Upper Canada" and "Canada"

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[3] Sydney Nathans, *To Free a Family: The Journey of Mary Walker* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 253.
[4] Karolyn Smardz Frost, *Steal Away Home: One Woman's Epic Flight to Freedom – And Her Long Road Back to the South* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2017), xviii.

primarily signify present-day southwestern Ontario; between 1793 and 1841, the province was officially called Upper Canada. However, the province was officially known as "Canada West" between 1841 and 1867.[5]

AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

For most of the twentieth century, scholars failed to understand the significance of family and kinship networks to enslaved African Americans. In his book *The Peculiar Institution*, Kenneth Stampp claimed that enslaved families were "highly unstable," and that family structures held less "social significance" among enslaved African Americans than White Americans. Enslaved men and women, it was maintained, adopted a "casual attitude" toward marriage and family life. In the 1970s, a new wave of revisionist historians debunked earlier claims regarding the stability of enslaved families. Revisionists emphasized Black agency and resistance to enslavement and argued that family and community were vital to the lives of enslaved people. John Blassingame described the family as "one of the most important survival mechanisms for the slave," and "an important buffer, a refuge from the rigors of slavery."[6]

Since the 1960s, historians have shed light on the rich diversity of enslaved families throughout the antebellum South. According to Herbert Gutman, whose work greatly influenced most scholarship on Black family life and culture, enslaved African Americans strove to replicate nuclear family structures whenever possible. In recent decades, some scholars have challenged Gutman's emphasis on two-parent, nuclear family households. Brenda Stevenson, for instance, argues that African American families in the Upper South were "essentially were not nuclear and did not derive from long-term monogamous marriages." The prevalence of "abroad

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[5] "Underground Railroad Terminology," *National Park Service*, accessed Apr. 9, 2019. https://www.nps.gov/subjects/ugrr/discover_history/terminology.htm; Frost, *Steal Away Home*, xxi.

[6] Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 343-349; John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 78-79; 103.

marriages" (where enslaved parents lived apart on different homesteads), single-parent households, matrifocal families, and extended kinship networks illustrates the sheer diversity of Black family structures in the antebellum South. Furthermore, several scholars have noted that enslaved African Americans embraced "fictive kin," or members that were not related by blood or marriage but were nonetheless embedded within family structures. Friends and loved ones often performed the roles of absent parents, siblings, and other family members.[7]

Families and kinship networks were almost always under threat in the antebellum period as Southern White enslavers regularly disrupted enslaved Black families in several ways. Physical and sexual violence against enslaved people (particularly women) threatened the stability of Black marriages and families throughout the South. Furthermore, White enslavers in the Upper South hired out enslaved men, women, and even children with little regard for family structures. James Pennington, a self-emancipator from Maryland, was hired out to work at age nine as a stone mason for two years. Pennington claimed that enslavers regularly hired out children "not only because they save themselves the expense of taking care of them, but in this way they get among their slaves useful trades."[8]

The forced separation of enslaved families was, in the words of Blassingame, "the most brutal aspect of slavery." The domestic slave trade underwent a huge expansion between the early national period and the U.S. Civil War. "Between 1790 and 1860," writes Steven Deyle, "Americans transported from the Upper South to the Lower South more than 1 million African American slaves, approximately two-thirds of whom arrived there as a result of sale." The growth in interstate trade is mostly

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[7] Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976); Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 324. For more on fictive kinship, see Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[8] Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1993; reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 139; Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 80; James W. C. Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith; or, Events in the History of James W. C. Pennington, Pastor of a Presbyterian Church, New York, Formerly a Slave in the State of Maryland, United*

attributable to several factors: first, the rapid rise of cotton and sugar economies in the Lower South increased demand for enslaved African Americans. Moreover, the shift to less labor-intensive grain economies in the Upper South reduced the need for enslaved Black labor. Enslavers in Virginia, Maryland, and elsewhere sold "surplus" enslaved people to reduce the costs of maintaining a large enslaved labor force. Finally, the closure of the Atlantic slave trade in 1808 resulted in increased demand for enslaved African Americans.[9]

Symbols of the interregional slave trade were commonplace throughout the South with public auctions and slave pens visible in every major Southern city. Enslaved African Americans were forcibly removed to the Lower South in overland coffles, or by steamboats and ships via the United States' inland waterways, namely the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, or by Atlantic coastal maritime routes. Formerly enslaved people recounted the horrors of the river trade in their autobiographies and testimonies. Henry Bibb, a self-emancipator from Kentucky, was sold "down South" to New Orleans in 1839 after attempting to liberate his enslaved wife and child. Bibb spent six weeks aboard the steamboat *Water Witch*, which traveled to the Lower South via the Ohio River. Bibb recalled, "It was impossible to sleep, being annoyed by the bustle and crowd of the passengers on board; by the terrible thought that we were destined to be sold in market as sheep or oxen[.]"[10] Southern enslavers rarely prioritized family ties over the potential for profit. Robert Gudmestad claimed that the interstate slave trade "routinely ravaged kinship ties," and enslavers' concerns toward African American families "varied immensely and could only operate within the bounds of the South's credit and economic system." The threat of permanent separation loomed over every single enslaved family in the Upper South.[11]

States (London: Charles Gilpin, 1849), accessed via https://docSouth.unc.edu/neh/penning49/penning49.html.

[9] Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 89; Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4-5.

[10] Deyle, *Carry Me Back,* 143-148; Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 81-87; Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (New York: Published by the Author, 1849), 99-100, accessed via https://docSouth.unc.edu/neh/bibb/bibb.html.

[11] Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 71.

Frederick Douglass described the practice of forced separation of enslaved children from their parents as "a marked feature of the cruelty and barbarity of the slave system." The trauma of being torn from one's family remained with enslaved men, women, and children for the rest of their lives. Born in Virginia, William Grimes was first sold at age ten and served various enslavers over the course of his enslavement. He wrote, "It grieved me to see my mother's tears at our separation. I was a heart-broken child, although too young to realize the afflictions of a tender mother, who was also a slave, the hopes of freedom for her already lost; but I was compelled to go and leave her."[12]

James W. C. Pennington remembered seeing "children go from our plantations to join the chained-gang on its way from Washington to Louisiana[.]" Likewise, Thomas Hedgebeth of Chatham, Upper Canada, recalled the permanent separation of an enslaved family at auction in North Carolina after their enslaver's death: "The father went one way, the mother another, with one child, and the other two children another way." Such traumatic scenes were commonplace at slave auctions across the South. While some Southern Whites expressed concern about the separation of enslaved families, most were willing to set their anxieties aside if the profit to be made was lucrative enough. Hedgebeth noted, "I never heard a White man at a sale express a wish that a family might be sold together."[13]

The sale of parents, spouses, and children spurred many enslaved people to escape from the South. George Ramsey, an enslaved man from Kentucky, determined to escape from slavery after his wife and children were sold to the Arkansas Territory. Ramsey stated, "Canada was not in my head till I lost her completely, and then I thought I would go to Canada." Meanwhile, Henry Morehead,

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[12] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom. Part I – Life as a Slave. Part II – Life as a Freeman* (NY and Auburn: Miller, Orton & Muilligan, 1855), 37-38, accessed via https://docSouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass55/douglass55.html; William Grimes, *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave, Brought Down to the Present Time* (New Haven, CT: Published by the Author, 1855), 8-9, accessed via https://docSouth.unc.edu/neh/grimes55/grimes55.html.

[13] Pennington, *Fugitive Blacksmith*, 9; Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves, with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada* (Boston: John P. Jetwett and Company, 1856), 277-278, accessed via https://docSouth.unc.edu/neh/drew/drew.html.

who escaped from Kentucky with his family, told Drew, "I left because they were about selling my wife and children. I would rather have followed them to the grave, than to the Ohio River to see them go down. I knew It was death of victory – so I took them and started for Canada."[14]

BLACK FAMILIES, SELF-EMANCIPATION, AND ESCAPE TO THE NORTH

During the antebellum period, enslaved African Americans increasingly fled from their enslavers to the Northern states and Canada. Self-emancipation was one of the most powerful acts of resistance against their enslavement. Refusing to submit to their enslaver's authority, Black freedom seekers broke free from the figurative and literal chains of bondage. On the other, permanent escape symbolized a last act of desperation. Escapes from slavery, notes Rebecca Ginsburg, were "largely ad hoc, relying more on luck and opportunity than on prearranged plans, networks of 'conductors,' or secret signs." By and large, African American freedom seekers had to rely on their own wits and knowledge of the local terrain. For enslaved families, the decision to escape was largely unplanned and normally spurred by the fear of forced separation.[15]

Family flight was not exclusive to the antebellum era. During the Revolutionary War and War of 1812, for instance, enslaved families exploited the social and political turmoil to escape from their enslavers. In both wars, the British promised liberty and asylum to enslaved African Americans if they escaped from their U.S. enslavers to British lines. Thousands of enslaved men, women, and children fled from their American enslavers to enemy lines. Black freedom seekers were instrumental in transforming British wartime policy. Freedom seekers, writes Alan Taylor, "tended to bolt in two stages: in the first, a pioneer runaway made initial

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[14] John Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 440; Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 180-181.

[15] Rebecca Ginsburg, "Escaping through a Black Landscape," in Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg, eds., *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 53;

contact with the British, and then in the second stage, he returned home to liberate kin and friends." Ultimately, the refusal of enslaved African Americans to escape without their families and loved ones pushed the British toward more expansive asylum policies during both wars.[16]

Freedom seekers that fled to the Northern states and Canada came predominantly from Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri. Geographical proximity to the "free" states certainly increased the odds of successful escape. Other factors also created more opportunities for enslaved people in the region to escape Northward. Most notably, the presence of significant free Black populations in the border regions, particularly in Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia, enabled self-emancipators to pass as free people of color. By the mid-nineteenth century, almost half of Maryland's African American population were legally free. Baltimore and Washington, D.C., boasted some of the largest free Black populations in the Mason-Dixon borderland. Additionally, these centers held extensive maritime and rail links with Northern towns and cities, which facilitated the escape of numerous freedom seekers. Likewise, free Black populations in locales along the Ohio River borderland enhanced opportunities for self-liberators to escape. In some instances, freedom seekers hid themselves aboard steamboats and ships on the Ohio River.[17]

In most cases, freedom seekers fled alone or in small groups of no more than a handful to avoid being discovered by the authorities or slave catchers. A small number of African American refugee families also fled to the "free" states and

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John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 65-66.

[16] Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 4, 246.

[17] For Black population statistics in the Upper South, see Barbara Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 1-2. For freedom seekers in Baltimore, see Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 35. For freedom seekers in Pennsylvania, see David G. Smith, *On the Edge of Freedom: The Fugitive Slave Issue in South Central Pennsylvania, 1820-1870* (New York: Fordham University, 2013), esp. Ch. 1. For freedom seekers in the Ohio River borderland, see Matthew Salafia, *Slavery's Borderland: Freedom and Bondage Along the Ohio River* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), esp. Ch. 6.

Canada. One of the most well-known examples involved Josiah Henson and his wife and children. Born in Charles County, Maryland, Henson and his wife and children were sent by their enslaver, Isaac Riley, to work for his brother in Kentucky. Henson negotiated an arrangement with Riley to purchase his freedom for $450. Not long after, Riley reneged on his promise and made plans to sell Henson. Faced with permanent separation, Henson and his family resolved to escape across the Ohio River. The family took refuge in Cincinnati's African American community before heading onward to Canada.[18]

In other respects, family and kinship ties complicated the decision to escape. Self-emancipation invariably meant leaving behind some relatives and loved ones. James Pennington described leaving his enslaved family behind as one of the "great difficulties that stood in the way of my flight." Frederick Douglass, the renowned self-emancipator and abolitionist, believed that "thousands would escape from slavery who remain there now, but for the strong cords of affection that bind them to their families, relatives and friends." However, many enslaved people resolved to flee from bondage when threatened with the permanent disruption of families.[19]

Newspaper notices also illustrate the varied nature of family flight to the North and Canada. In February 1819, the Indiana *Western Sun & General Advertiser* printed a notice for "two Black Negro Slaves, a man named STAFFORD, and his wife BETTY," who had both absconded from Louisville in August 1818. Some advertisements demonstrate the remarkable heroism of enslaved mothers as they sought to liberate their children. In October 1858, the *Louisville Daily Courier* published an advertisement for a "Negro Woman and Three Children," who escaped from Jefferson County, Kentucky, one of whom was a twenty-six-year-old woman named Betsy, who managed to escape with her three children while "far advanced in

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[18] Josiah Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (Boston: A. D. Phelps, 1849), accessed via https://docSouth.unc.edu/neh/henson49/henson49.html.
[19] Pennington, *Fugitive Blacksmith*, 12; Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 333.

pregnancy, probably about eight months." Her enslaver promised three hundred and fifty dollars if "caught and put in jail out of State."[20]

Escape from the Lower South was much more difficult. The smaller free Black populations and greater geographical distances deterred most from even attempting the journey. Nevertheless, some freedom seekers from the Lower South successfully launched daring escapes to the Northern states and Canada. One of the most remarkable cases of self-emancipation and escape from enslavement involved William and Ellen Craft, an enslaved couple from Georgia. Under the plan, Ellen, a fair-skinned African American woman, would pass as a male enslaver traveling with an enslaved servant. William Craft later recalled, "I cut off my wife's hair square at the back of the head, and got her to dress in the disguise and stand out on the floor. I found that she made a most respectable looking gentleman." Remarkably, the Crafts managed to escape aboard steamboats and trains to Philadelphia without being discovered by the authorities.[21]

Family escapes were typically improvised and highly dangerous for several reasons. First, enslaved people often resolved to escape in response to immediate threats, particularly the threat of sale and permanent separation. This situation offered little time to plan escape strategies and gather provisions. Moreover, enslaved African Americans possessed varying levels of mobility. African American men were generally afforded greater levels of mobility than enslaved women. Enslavers, particularly in the Upper South, regularly hired out enslaved men to work in towns and cities.[22]

By contrast, enslaved women were generally required to remain at their enslaver's homestead and assume child-rearing responsibilities, which restricted their spheres of mobility. By all accounts, escaping with children was more difficult than

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[20] "100 Dollars Reward," *Western Sun & General Advertiser*, Feb. 20, 1819; "$300 Reward – Negro Woman and Three Children Ranaway," *Louisville Daily Courier*, Oct. 9, 1858.

[21] William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or, The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery* (London: William Tweedie, 1860), 35-36, accessed via: https://docSouth.unc.edu/neh/craft/craft.html.

[22] For more on enslaved hiring practices in the U.S. South, see Jonathan D. Martin, *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

escaping alone. But most mothers were reluctant to leave their sons and daughters behind. With limited knowledge of their geographical surroundings, fewer social networks (particularly with free people of color), and the unique challenges of escaping with children, African American women in the South were much less likely to mount permanent escapes to the Northern states and Canada. Nevertheless, enslaved women were not completely immobile or passive victims. Deborah Gray White argues that truancy, or short-term escape to woods, swamps, and urban locales within the South, "became a way of life" for many enslaved women. Furthermore, a small proportion of enslaved women succeeded in absconding to the North and Canada with their husbands and children. Threatened with permanent separation, female self-emancipators threw caution to the wind and made every effort to protect their families.[23]

Refugee families that escaped encountered a host of obstacles. According to Rebecca Ginsburg, freedom seekers often became disoriented in their unfamiliar surroundings. Traveling through woods and crossing rivers was difficult for any freedom seeker, let alone with elderly relatives, spouses, or young children. During their escape to Ohio, Henson and his family ran out of food and water. He later remembered, "I had the misery to hear the cry of hunger and exhaustion from those I loved so dearly." Indeed, Henson was compelled to seek food and water from a nearby resident – a risky move which could have led to the family's recapture. The weather and climate also presented significant challenges to refugee families. Escaping with parents, spouses, or children required spreading already thin resources between many people. Henry Morehead stated, "The weather was cold and my feet were frostbitten, as I gave my wife my socks to pull on over her shoes."[24]

Although some families succeeded, many others were caught by bounty hunters or Southern enslavers. In January 1856, Margaret Garner and her family fled

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[23] For more on enslaved women, see Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 36-38; Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (NEW YORK: W. W. Norton & Co., 1985), 70-76 (quote on page 75).

from Kentucky to the Cincinnati area. Not long after, Southern enslavers discovered their whereabouts and initiated efforts to re-enslave the family. Rather than witnessing her children forced back into slavery, Margaret Garner killed her youngest daughter with a butcher knife and attempted unsuccessfully to take the lives of her other children.[25]

To mitigate the prospect of recapture, many enslaved families staggered their escapes to the North. Thomas Johnson, who escaped from Kentucky, told Benjamin Drew that his wife "wished to leave for Canada, with the three youngest children. I gave her money and she got away into Canada safe enough." After his wife and children escaped, Johnson was detained in jail and questioned about their whereabouts. Johnson's enslaver, convinced that he would run away eventually to be with his wife and children, resolved to sell him. Before he could be handcuffed and removed from the farm, Johnson escaped from his captors fled to Cincinnati before heading to Canada. He recalled, "I aimed for Toronto, but on my way fell in with a man… who knew where my wife and children lived in Malden. I went there and joined them[.]"[26]

AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

From the 1820s onward, African Americans and White abolitionists organized freedom networks to assist refugees to the North and Canada. The Underground Railroad (hereafter "UGRR") was a series of loosely organized, clandestine escape networks which stretched across the Northern states. The phrase "Underground Railroad" allegedly came from an incident involving Tice Davids, a self-emancipator from Kentucky. In 1831, Davids fled from his enslaver and swam across the Ohio

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[24] Ginsburg, "Escaping Through a Black Landscape," 59; Henson, *Life of Josiah Henson*, 51; Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 181.
[25] See Nikki M. Taylor, *Driven Toward Madness: The Fugitive Slave Margaret Garner and Tragedy on the Ohio* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016).
[26] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 379-381.

River. Unable to find the freedom seeker, Davids' enslaver allegedly concluded that the freedom seeker must have escaped on an "underground rail road."[27]

Fergus Bordewich described the UGRR as the "first great movement of civil disobedience since the American Revolution[.]" Traditional conceptualizations of the UGRR emphasized the role of White abolitionists and Quakers in aiding self-emancipators to the North and Canada. Wilbur H. Siebert's *The Underground Railroad*, which focused on the campaigns and efforts of White Americans, influenced scholars for decades. Beginning in the 1960s, revisionist historians have reconceptualized our understanding of the antebellum Black freedom movement. Most notably, Larry Gara emphasized Black agency over White activism. Today, scholars largely agree that the UGRR, in the words of Keith Griffler, was an "interracial movement… of White activists acting not alone but in concert with African American communities."[28]

Traditional maps of the UGRR present a series of clearly defined freedom routes (usually depicted as a series of lines and interconnected dots) that were linked by a series of safe houses (or "stations") which were owned by free people of color, White abolitionists or Quakers ("conductors"). Undoubtedly, well-organized networks operated between the Upper South and Canada. In Ripley, Ohio, Rev. John Rankin and African American activist John Parker provided shelter for slave refugees and aided them across the Ohio River. In Philadelphia, New York City, Boston, and other locales along the Eastern seaboard, vigilance committees—abolitionist organizations which free African Americans and self-emancipated freedom seekers—operated in most major Northern cities. Black abolitionists like William Still in

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[27] Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (NEW YORK: Back Bay Books, 2004), 61.

[28] Fergus M. Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Epic Story of the Underground Railroad, America's First Civil Rights Movement* (NEW YORK: Amistad, 2005), 5; Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961); Keith Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 8.

Philadelphia and David Ruggles in New York City became vital actors in the Black freedom movement.[29]

However, most self-emancipators were not actively assisted by the UGRR. As mentioned earlier, most freedom seekers sought refuge in free Black communities. By the 1830s, Northern cities boasted significant African American populations which provided social camouflage and support networks. Thousands of self-emancipators consequently fled to key urban centers like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and elsewhere. In these cities, African Americans organized and maintained the first escape networks to Canada. Furthermore, Cheryl LaRoche argues that rural Black communities "acted as conduits for escape before the Civil War." Across the Mason-Dixon and Ohio River borderlands, Black settlements, many of which were settled by formerly enslaved African Americans, became beacons of liberty for freedom seekers.[30]

Refugee families received assistance from African American and White UGRR agents in Northern cities. Men, women, and children arrived at the offices of abolitionists and vigilance committee members seeking food, shelter, and transportation. In Philadelphia, William Still and the Vigilance Committee aided hundreds of slave refugees to Canada. Still's letters and Philadelphia Vigilance Committee records provide tremendous insight into UGRR operations. According to Julie Roy Jeffrey, William Still depicted freedom seekers as "heroic actors who seized

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[29] For more on UGRR operations in Ripley, Ohio, see Ann Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad* (NEW YORK: Simon & Schuster, 2004). For Northern vigilance committees, see Graham Russell Hodges, *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*; Beverly C. Tomek, "Vigilance Committees," *Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, accessed April 9, 2019. https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/vigilance-committees.

[30] Cheryl LaRoche, *Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 2. Foner's *Gateway to Freedom* is the key text for freedom seekers in New York City. For Philadelphia, see Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1998). For Boston, see Stephen Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1889* (NEW YORK: Penguin Books, 2013). For Cincinnati, see Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

freedom for themselves instead of waiting for abolitionists to free them and tell their story."[31]

Still witnessed the arrival of numerous self-liberated refugee families at his Philadelphia office. In some cases, mothers and fathers arrived at his office with their children. In 1855, David Bennett, his wife Martha, and their two children arrived at Still's office from Loudon County, Virginia. Around the same time, William Nelson, his wife, Susan, and their son William Thomas also arrived in Philadelphia. According to Still, the family had secretly "availed themselves of the schooner of Captain B. who allowed them to embark at Norfolk, despite the search laws of Virginia."[32]

In New York City, abolitionist Sydney Howard Gay kept very detailed records of the hundreds of refugees that arrived at his office. His "Record of Fugitives," notes Eric Foner, is "the most detailed account" of UGRR operations in the city. More than two hundred cases are detailed over two books, which provide a rich account of the motivations behind and means of escape, UGRR networks, and the importance of family. The majority escaped from Virginia and Maryland, with others escaping from elsewhere in the South. Some had been forwarded directly from William Still's office in Philadelphia.[33]

Gay documented various types of Black refugee family units at his office over a two-year period. In May 1856, for example, he recorded the arrival of Winny Patsy with her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter. Winny's husband, Jacob Shooster, had escaped from Norfolk, Virginia, the previous fall to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Gay forwarded the mother and daughter pair to be with him. Similarly, in April 1856, Rebecca Jones escaped from Norfolk with her three children. Her brother, Isaiah Robinson, had arrived one week prior. Following their enslaver's death, Rebecca

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[31] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember: Antislavery Autobiographies and the Unfinished Work of Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 65.

[32] William Still, *The Underground Railroad: A Selection of Authentic Narratives* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872; London: Arcturus Publishing, 2017), 293, 297.

[33] Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, 194-195.

learned that "two of her brothers, [and] a sister were sold, [and] she had reason to suppose that she [and] her children would follow."[34]

In other instances, family members arrived in stages over the course of several days or weeks. On November 10, 1855, Gay recorded the arrival of "Harriet [Shepherd], with her five children," who had escaped from Maryland with her brothers and two other men by stealing "two carriages [and] a pair of horses to each of their respective masters[.]" A few weeks later, a man named John Bright reached New York City with his wife. Both belonged to the "same party with Harriet… who is his sister." Two days after Bright's arrival, two teenagers named Tom Castle and Ezekiel Chambers arrived at Gay's office. According to the records, Tom was "John Bright's step-son," while Ezekiel (listed as "Zeke") "was raised by Harriet."[35]

"INFORMATION WANTED": AFRICAN AMERICAN REFUGEES AND THE SEARCH FOR FAMILY

Tens of thousands of freedom seekers fled from the United States to Upper Canada during the antebellum period. African American refugees settled in various urban and rural locales throughout the province. Toronto boasted a significant free Black population in the early nineteenth century. In April 1858, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* claimed that between 1,200 and 1,600 free people of color lived in the city. Farther west, Black newcomers also resettled in London, Hamilton, and other towns in the central counties. Benjamin Drew estimated that 350 free Blacks resided in London at the time of his visit. The following year, the *New York Tribune* reported that "400 to

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[34] Sydney Howard Gay, "Record of Fugitives. Book 2, page [13-15]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed March 1, 2018, https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8911; Sydney Howard Gay, "Record of Fugitives. Book 2, page [2]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed March 1, 2018, https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8900.

[35] Sydney Howard Gay, "Record of Fugitives. Book 1, page [19]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed March 1, 2018, https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8865; Howard Gay, "Record of Fugitives. Book 1, page [26]," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*, accessed March 1, 2018, https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives/item/8872.

600 coloured [sic] people, among them Blacksmiths, carpenters, plasterers, and one wheelwright" resided in Hamilton.[36]

Most incoming refugees settled in towns and cities throughout Detroit and Niagara River borderlands. In Essex and Chatham-Kent, African American newcomers integrated into Black communities in Sandwich, Amherstburg, Colchester, Windsor, Chatham, Buxton, and elsewhere. Indeed, the *New York Tribune* referred to Chatham as "the headquarters of the coloured [sic] people," and claimed that approximately one-third of the town's total residents were people of African descent. Meanwhile, St. Catherines boasted the largest Black population in the Niagara borderland. Beyond towns and cities, Black refugees also settled in an uncleared wilderness region known as the Queen's Bush. These pioneers sought to establish independent farming communities. Several independent Black settlements were established in the Southwestern counties of Upper Canada.[37]

The experiences of African American refugees in Canada varied greatly. Some became successful entrepreneurs, newspaper editors, politicians, and social activists. Thornton and Lucie Blackburn, for example, formed Toronto's first taxi cab company. Meanwhile, Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Henry Bibb established two of Canada's first Black newspapers, the *Provincial Freeman* and *Voice of the Fugitive*, respectively. Yet most African American refugees endured poverty and racial prejudice. Most lived in segregated locales and suffered varying degrees of discrimination from Canadian

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[36] *Anti-Slavery Reporter* quoted in Adrienne Shadd, Afua Cooper, and Karolyn Smardz Frost, *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop, Toronto!* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2005), 15; Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 147; "The Negroes of Hamilton and Chatham," *New York Tribune*, reprinted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Oct. 31, 1857. The key texts on Black settlement in Canada are Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); and Jason Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to American Fugitive Slaves, 1800-1865* (Millwood, NY: Associated Faculty Press, 1986).

[37] "The Negroes of Hamilton and Chatham," *New York Tribune*. For the Detroit River borderlands, see Irene Moore Davis, "Canadian Black Settlements in the Detroit River Region," in Karolyn Smardz Frost and Veta S. Tucker, eds., *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Resistance, and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderland* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016), 83-101. For the Niagara River borderland, see Dann J. Broyld, "'Over the Way': On the Border of Canada before the Civil War," in Paul Lovejoy and Vanessa Oliveira, eds., *Slavery, Memory, Citizenship* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2016). For the Queen's Bush area, see Linda Kubisch-Brown, *The Queen's Bush Settlement: Black Pioneers, 1839-1865* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2004).

Whites. Furthermore, a small number of freedom seekers, such as the Blackburns, Jesse Happy, and Solomon Moseby, were almost extradited back to the United States and re-enslaved. Nevertheless, freedom in Canada was infinitely preferable to enslavement in the South.[38]

African American refugees in Upper Canada often felt tremendous anguish from having left enslaved loved ones behind. Henry Atkinson, a freedom seeker in St. Catherines, described the sensation of escaping without his wife: "it was like taking my heart's blood: but I could not help it—I expected to be taken away where I should never see her again[.]" Others expressed remorse at losing their spouses and children. David West of St. Catherines recalled, "My family are perpetually on my mind. I should be perfectly happy if I could have my wife and the four children." Likewise, Henry Crawhion, who escaped from Louisville, told Benjamin Drew, "It is hard on me that I am obliged to live away from my family."[39]

Abolitionists acted as conduits between self-emancipators and their enslaved loved ones. William Still received countless letters from Black refugees who wished to learn more about their loved ones in the United States. John Henry Hill escaped from his enslavers in Richmond, Virginia, on January 1, 1853, after learning that he was to be sold. A carpenter by trade, Hill hid in "a kitchen of a merchant" in the city for nine months before escaping to Philadelphia. With help from the local vigilance committee, he traveled to Albany and Rochester, before crossing the Niagara River at Lewiston, New York. On November 12, 1853, he wrote to Still, "My friend whatever you hear from my wife please write to me. Whenever she come to your city please give instruction how to travel." On December 29, Hill informed Still that his wife had arrived in Canada.[40]

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[38] For more on Thornton and Lucie Blackburn, see Karolyn Smardz Frost, *I've Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad* (NEW YORK: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007). For more on Henry Bibb and his newspaper *Voice of the Fugitive*, see Afua Cooper, "The *Voice of the Fugitive*: *A Transnational Abolitionist Organ*," in Frost and Tucker, *A Fluid Frontier*, 135-153. For more on Mary Ann Shadd Carey, see Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Carey: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). For Black refugee extradition cases, see Bryan Prince, "The Illusion of Safety: Attempts to Extradite Fugitive Slaves from Canada," in Frost and Tucker, *A Fluid Frontier*, 67-79.
[39] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 81-82, 89, 257.
[40] Still, *The Underground Railroad*, 207-221.

Some wrote to their former enslavers to request the liberation of their loved ones. Jackson Whitney, another self-emancipator from Kentucky, escaped after learning that his enslaver, William Riley, intended to sell him in Louisville. In a letter dated March 15, 1859, Whitney informed his former enslaver that he had been in the "Fugitive's Home" near Sandwich, Upper Canada, for "several days" and was "in good health." He appealed to Riley to release his wife and children from bondage, writing, "Perhaps, by this time, you have concluded that robbing a woman of her husband and children of their father does not pay, at least in your case[.]"[41]

Others searched for loved ones by placing "information wanted" advertisements in newspapers. In December 1855, George T. Smith submitted an ad to the *Provincial Freeman* for his brother, Joseph W. Hines, of Bowling Green. About three months later, John Murry attempted to locate his father, who had escaped from slavery in Maryland years prior. Meanwhile, in May 1856, Rev. H. J. Young of Chatham placed an advertisement on behalf of Jefferson Davis, a slave refugee from Loudon County, Virginia, who had left "in company with his brothers Moses and Lewis… about eleven years ago in search of freedom, but on their way they was [sic] attacked by slave-catchers, at which time a battle ensued, resulting in the capture of Jefferson, while the other two Moses and Lewis effected their escape[.]" After purchasing his own freedom, Davis went to Canada in search of his brothers.[42]

Some refugees from slavery even organized rescue operations to liberate enslaved family members. Born enslaved in Dorchester County, Maryland, Harriet Tubman (born Araminta "Minty" Ross) escaped in 1849 to St. Catherines, Canada, and became a prominent abolitionist and UGRR activist in the Niagara River borderland. Tubman returned to Maryland's Eastern Shore at least thirteen times and

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[41] C. Peter Ripley, ed., *Black Abolitionist Papers: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 406-407.

[42] "John A. Murry searching for his father," Information Wanted Ads, The Provincial Freeman (Windsor/Toronto/Chatham), March 1, 1856, Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery, accessed March 7, 2018, http://informationwanted.org/items/show/1140; "Rev. H. J. Young searching for Moses and Lewis Davis on behalf of Jefferson Davis," Information Wanted Ads, The Provincial Freeman (Windsor/Toronto/Chatham), May 10, 1856, Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery, accessed March 7, 2018, http://informationwanted.org/items/show/1141.

liberated approximately seventy enslaved people, including her parents, siblings, and other loved ones.[43]

CONCLUSION

For many freedom seekers, family was central to self-emancipation. The threat of permanent separation spurred many enslaved men and women to escape. While some refugee families fled together, others devised alternative strategies to diminish the heightened risks posed by family flight. While most escaped alone, others were aided by free African Americans and White abolitionists in the Northern states and Upper Canada. Some freedom seekers even put their own safety at risk to liberate their enslaved loved ones. Even after securing their own liberty, African American refugees never forgot the kinship ties which sustained them throughout their lives.

Discussion Questions

1. Why was family important to enslaved African Americans?
2. What were the primary motivations behind self-emancipation?
3. What strategies did enslaved families employ to escape?
4. How did freedom seekers sustain family bonds after escaping from enslavement?

Writing Prompts

Historians face numerous challenges in documenting the lives of enslaved and free African Americans prior to the U.S. Civil War. The relative scarcity of primary sources relating to African Americans challenges scholars to find new ways to document their lives. This chapter employed autobiographies and testimonies, newspapers, and abolitionist records. Write a short essay on the strengths and weaknesses of these

[43] Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (NEW YORK: Ballantine, 2004), xvii. Also see Clinton, *Harriet Tubman*.

sources. What other materials could shed light on the history of African-descended people before the Civil War?

Chapter 5

Some Notes on the History of Black Sexuality in the United States

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"African American experience simultaneously reflects the problems faced by other groups of oppressed people; yet, it is also a unique history that must be explained in its own right" – Patricia Hill Collins (2004)[1]

"The pathologizing of Black sexuality continued as means of affirming the superior status of Europeans while restricting the social movement of Black people by characterizing egalitarian interaction with them as undesirable" – Kevin McGruder (2010)[2]

INTRODUCTION

Negative attitudes about sexual matters have persisted for centuries in the Western world. There has been a history of sex negativity, misinformation about sexuality, sexual injustice, and myths surrounding sexuality. The history of sexuality reveals that these negative attitudes, myths, and forms of misinformation have not been innocuous. People have been disproportionately harmed as a result. This chapter is intended to be a general historical overview of the topic, covering enduring themes and patterns that have persisted through much of U.S. history, rather than a narrow focus on a particular sexual topic or historical period.

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[1] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), 13.
[2] Kevin McGruder, "Pathologizing Black Sexuality: The U.S. Experience," In *Black Sexualities: Probing Powers, Passions, Practices, and Policies,* eds. Juan Battle and Sandra L. Barnes (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 104.

Black sexuality has received a fair amount of scholarly attention by historians and cultural studies scholars over the past several years. What has resulted is a body of literature that paints a clear picture about how not only preoccupied American culture has been with sexual matters, but an even greater intensity has been generated about Black sexuality. Ample historical evidence makes clear just how suspect Black sexuality has been portrayed and treated. These prevailing negative attitudes about Black people generally and their sexuality more specifically originated when Europeans came into contact with African people several centuries ago prior to chattel slavery in North America.

BLACK SEXUALITY AND ORIGINS OF DISCRIMINATION

The definitions of what constitutes a Black person or a Black community are deeply nuanced and can vary and be interpreted in a number of different ways. For example, some peoples from the Caribbean and Latin America are considered to be Black. Moreover, a "transnational Black consciousness"[3] extends beyond any monolithic understanding of Blackness. Also, individuals from a variety of ethnic backgrounds identify as Black. In this chapter, however, the term "Black people" refers to those individuals in the United States who are of African descent. Twinet Parmer and James Gordon describe Black sexuality as "a collective cultural expression of the multiple identities as sexual beings of a group of Africans in America, who share a slave history that over time has strongly shaped the Black experiences in White America."[4] There has been a more pronounced focus on Black sexuality than on the sexuality of other ethnic groups. Sharon Rachel and Christian Thrasher note that "[t]here is no discourse on

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[3] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Black in Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 9.

[4] Twinet Parmer and James A. Gordon, "Cultural Influences on African American Sexuality: The Role of Multiple Identities on Kinship, Power, and Ideology," In *Sexual Health, Volume 3, Moral and Cultural Foundations*, eds. Mitchell S. Tepper and Annette Fuglsang Owens (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 175.

'White' sexuality, 'Jewish' sexuality, 'Native American' sexuality, etc."[5] Even though there is not much work to speak of that focuses on "White" heterosexuality *per se* in the ways in which the discourse on Black sexuality has been created, it is safe to say that the dominant discourse about sexuality centers and normalizes White sexuality in general and is grounded in dominant cultural terms. It is also important to note that there has been pushback to de-center Whiteness. Counternarratives have been produced that question and interrogate the backdrop of Whiteness that has been used to normalize White hegemonic sexuality on the one hand and at the same time degrade Black sexuality on the other hand. Black sexuality has historically been negatively judged against a particular kind of White sexual norms: "[t]he pathologizing of Black sexuality continued as means of affirming the superior status of Europeans while restricting the social movement of Black people by characterizing egalitarian interaction with them as undesirable."[6]

Perhaps one of the most poignant and foundational examples of debasing the female Black body with a particular emphasis on big breasts, buttocks, and other sexual body parts occurred in the early nineteenth century with the European obsession with a woman named Saartjie Baartman (1789-1815). Also known as "The Hottentot Venus," Baartman was a Khoikhoi woman originally from southwest Africa. Essentially, Baartman was taken from her homeland in Africa to Europe, where she was put on exhibit for public viewings in England and France from 1810 until her death.[7] Such a display of Baartman's body was certainly a way of "Othering" her Black body, especially compared with White European women. Exhibiting Baartman was both a way of showing various aspects of Black sexuality as well as making her a spectacle. Her years on exhibition constituted more of an ongoing "freak show" than honoring Baartman or her body in any way. Magdalena Barrera has noted that "When the [public] paid to see

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[5] Sharon Rachel and Christian Thrasher. "A History of 'Black' Sexuality in the United States: From Preslavery to the Era of HIV/AIDS to a Vision of HOPE for the Future." (Washington, DC: American Public Health Association, 2015), para 5.
[6] McGruder, "Pathologizing Black Sexuality: The U.S. Experience," 104.
[7] Sadiah Qureshi, "Displaying Sara Baartman, the 'Hottentot Venus'," *History of Science* 42, no. 2 (2004): 235.

her 'perform'—she was held in a cage and made to dance half-naked in order to receive any food…People were so perplexed upon seeing her that they debated whether she was even human."[8] Following her death in 1815, Baartman's image remained on display in the form of a plaster cast of her body at the *Musēe de l'Homme* in Paris, France, and her sexual body parts were preserved and kept on display until the 1970s.[9] It was not until 2002 that Saartjie Baartman's bodily remains were returned to her homeland in South Africa for a proper, respectful, and humane burial based on an arrangement made by South African President Nelson Mandela with the French government.[10] The Baartman story illustrates the exoticization of the Black female body, which reified and perpetuated the Western notion of Blackness and linked it to being less than human, lascivious, and non-normative.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR NEGATIVE ATTITUDES ABOUT BLACK SEXUALITY

While the Baartman story provides a single example of the characterization of Black sexuality, it fits with a larger picture of the construction of race that pre-dates Baartman being put on display in Europe. Europeans formed their views of Black people as far back as the sixteenth century. When Europeans came into contact with Africans and witnessed how they interacted sexually with other Africans and non-African individuals as well as the degree to which Africans were clothed, negative attitudes were formed about African sexuality. Historian Kevin McGruder (2010) further states that "[t]he limited apparel worn by most Africans was interpreted by Europeans as a sign of lasciviousness or lack of modesty rather than a concession to the tropical climate. Linked to this impression was a perception that the sex drives of Africans were uncontrollable."[11] Even more insidious was the suggestion that African people were less

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[8] Magdalena Berrera, "Hottentot 2000: Jennifer Lopez and Her Butt," In *Sexualities in History: A Reader*, eds. Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay (New York: Routledge, 2002), 410.
[9] Rachel and Thrasher, "Black Sexuality in the United States," para 7.
[10] Qureshi, "Displaying Sara Baartman, the 'Hottentot Venus'," 233.
[11] McGruder, "Pathologizing Black Sexuality: The U.S. Experience," 104.

than human, even to the extent of their being animalized.[12] This portrayal of African people by Europeans continued for the duration not only of chattel slavery in the American South from 1619 to 1863, but also long after slavery ended into the Jim Crow Era and beyond. Another factor that influenced and perpetuated racist ideologies that concerned both sexual and non-sexual aspects of Black people involved scientific racism that was prominent from the 1600s until the end of World War II (now regarded as pseudo-science and thoroughly disregarded as nonsense). Among the academic and professional fields that practiced scientific racism were anthropology, biological sciences, medicine, and so on in Europe and the United States. A description of Black people from this perspective was written by the nineteenth-century French naturalist and zoologist Georges Cuvier, the same individual who dissected and preserved Baartman's sexual body parts, appeared in his book *The Animal Kingdom: Arranged in Conformity with Its Organization* (1817). Among many other topics, Cuvier covered the varieties of the human species. In part, he wrote, "The Negro race is confined to the south of mount Atlas; it is marked by a Black complexion; crisp or woolly hair, compressed cranium, and a flat nose. The projection of the lower parts of the face, and the thick lips, evidently appropriate it to the monkey tribe; the hordes of which it consists have always remained in the most complete state of barbarism."[13] Such a description is not only generally dehumanizing but the likening of people of African descent to animals extends to attitudes about their sexuality. Such attitudes deriving from the observations of African people by Europeans when they first visited Africa in the sixteenth century coupled with the racist pseudo-science that was characterized by Cuvier's claims above, in part, provided a rationale for enslaving people of African

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[12] A number of scholarly works comment on the extent to which Africans were likened to animals. See, for example, Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics,* 55, David Brion Davis, "Constructing Race: A Reflection." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 9-10. doi:10.2307/2953310, and Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press), 231 and *passim*.

[13] Georges Cuvier. *The Animal Kingdom: Arranged in Conformity with its Organization* (New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1833), 50.

descent in North America, and particularly what would become the Southern states of the U.S.

BLACK SEXUALITY DURING SLAVERY

While it is clear that prior to slavery, "The Peculiar Institution," Europeans did much to cement the idea that Blacks were inferior to Whites, and therefore "the color lines" were drawn and racist ideologies became the norm. Even so, plenty of historical evidence confirms that interracial sexual relationships took place between Blacks and Whites. Such sexual liaisons, however, would become increasingly socially unacceptable particularly as mixed-race children who resulted from such unions challenged both racial hierarchy and the institution of slavery itself. Therefore, as slavery became more established, there was more of an effort to curb social and sexual relations between Black and White individuals. For example, if an enslaved Black man and a White woman had children, these offspring would be free and violate the "slavery for life" tenet[14] and blur racial lines that served to justify slavery and ensure its continuation. The dangers of cavorting with White women were made very clear to Black men. If Black men were discovered carrying on sexually with White women, it could prove to be catastrophic for these men. Likewise, White women were warned of the negative and damning impact on their reputations if their sexual relations with Black men were to be discovered. McGruder put it best by asserting, "Interracial sexual activity became increasingly problematic because it could result in biracial children whose very presence challenged the separate social spheres as well as the institution of slavery."[15]

Chattel slavery in the United States reveals much about the history of sexuality concerning Black people for over two centuries in which slavery was legal. As we know, slavery served to reinforce the racial divide and to perpetuate the racist notion that Black people were essentially animals. Even though there was a well-entrenched general belief of the inferiority of Black people by White Americans and Europeans and therefore a generalized disapproval of interracial sexual relations, many instances of

[14] McGruder, "Pathologizing Black Sexuality: The U.S. Experience," 105.
[15] *Ibid,* 105.

interracial sex—both consensual and non-consensual—took place. It was not uncommon for slave women to have sexual interactions with masters for a number of reasons. According to one historical account, "Some slave women responded to material incentives like food, clothing, and better housing that White men offered in exchange for sexual favors. Certainly, they were much more able than slave suitors to 'romance' slave women with gifts and promises of a better life."[16] And, in some cases emancipation was promised and occasionally realized. In some cases, slave women were bought and sold with the main purpose of serving as concubines.[17] However, while there were surely individual cases in which mutual sexual attraction and affection between enslaved women and White men existed, the power differential was inherently problematic. In the overwhelming majority of instances, Black female bodies were commodified, and these women lacked control over their bodies in a variety of ways, ranging from not being able to freely choose to abstain from sexual activity and not having the freedom to select a mate, to not having a choice about whether or not to produce children. Although slaves often valued sexual and romantic attachments and family, much of the time such relationships were tenuous at best, and often romantic relationships were interrupted if not destroyed due to slaves being sold and therefore relocated. Thus, any family unit created within such a relationship destabilized.

There were innumerable documented cases, for example, in which male masters raped female slaves. As a matter of fact, bondswomen were required to "live with males of their own race, but were also forced to have sexual relations with White men," and the women had no say in the matter because "planters' desires, not those of slaves, were responsible for this increase in the mulatto population, though some females

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[16] Brenda E. Stevenson, "Slave Marriage and Family Relations in Antebellum Virginia," in *Slavery and Emancipation*, eds. Rick Halpern and Enrico Dal Lago (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 253-54.

[17] Skylar Mamrak, "Victims of Lust and Hate: Master and Slave Sexual Relations in Antebellum United States." *Valley Humanities Review* (Spring 2016): 7.

willingly mixed their blood with that of White males."[18] In fact, most often the sex between White men and Black women involved rape by masters and other White men.[19] Sexual exploitation by White men was justified because Black women's sexuality was viewed as animalistic—as a sexual turn-on by many White men—and perpetuated the sexual abuse of slave women. The by-products of these forms of sexual violence included harm—both physical and psychological—to these women, biracial children, and the emasculation of enslaved suitors who witnessed these sheer abuses of power by the White masters and were powerless to do anything about it. Slave women were reminded on a regular basis that they had little to no control over their bodies. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins indicates, "Institutionalized rape, a form of sexual violence whose aim is to dominate or control its female (and male) victims, permeated chattel slavery. Rape served the specific purpose of political and/or economic domination of enslaved African women, and by extension, African Americans as a collectivity."[20] One of the more famous examples of an interracial relationship in the U.S. is the lifelong relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. After Jefferson made Hemings his concubine in Paris, she refused to return to the U.S. because she was free in France. According to an interview with their son Madison Hemings, Jefferson coerced Hemings into returning with him by "promis[ing] her extraordinary privileges, and made a solemn pledge that her children should be free at the age of twenty-one years."[21] Hemings, like so many other female slaves, had no

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[18] Thelma Jennings, "Us Colored Women Had to Go Through A Plenty: Sexual Exploitation of African-American Slave Women." *Journal of Women's History* 1, no. 3 (1990): 60.

[19] Martha Hodes, *White Women and Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 3.

[20] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*, 58.

[21]Madison Hemings, "The Memoirs of Madison Hemings." https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/cron/1873march.html (1873), para 3.

agency in her enslaved status and chose to give her children freedom rather than to claim her own liberty.

Many female slaves experienced sexual trauma and lacked control over their bodies, and although gender dynamics were different, male slaves had similar experiences. Masters viewed Black males as sexually libidinous and animalistic with raw and unbridled carnal desire. Essentially, Black men and women were put into the same basic category. The main difference is that Black male sexuality was feared, primarily based on potential sexual interactions between Black males and White women. The origin of White men's fears was multifaceted. Such relations could produce biracial children, which would blur the "color lines." Another factor concerned insecurity of the White men about their own sexual prowess. Would male slaves outperform their White masters on the sexual front? Winthrop Jordan addresses such potential fears and anxieties of masters by stating "[W]hite men anxious over their own sexual inadequacy were touched by a racking fear and jealousy. Perhaps the Negro better performed his nocturnal offices than the White man. Perhaps, indeed, the White man's woman really wanted the Negro more than she wanted him."[22] There was much talk about the sexual endowment of Black men. If Black males were sexual with White women, the repercussions were usually proportionate to the social standing and socioeconomic class of White women. The higher the status of the woman, the more dire consequences for the male slave, and the more the woman had to lose regarding her standing in her community. Additionally, elite White women were considered "pure," and to be sexually "defiled" by especially a Black man was viewed as highly problematic and therefore dangerous.[23] These scenarios would not be the only precarious position in which Black males would find themselves, sexually speaking.

Sexual abuse of male slaves was yet another problem. Much like the abuse of female slaves, male slaves were sexually abused by not only their masters, but also by

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[22]Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812,*
Second Edition, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1968/2012)*: 152.*
[23] Martha Hodes, *White Women and Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth Century South*, 5.

White women as well. One form of the abuse was that Black men were often forced to "breed." Some masters would identify a strong, well-built male to copulate with a specific female slave, who would provide ideal offspring for the business of slave labor. In some cases, male masters would watch the male and female have intercourse to ensure that mating happened. It is well documented that masters would "hire out" their male slaves who would likely produce healthy offspring. These men were forced to have sexual intercourse with several women in a short period of time and who to father numerous children. One documented case details how a male slave was required to impregnate approximately fifteen women and subsequently fathered dozens of offspring.[24]

Notably, such forced sexual couplings have been written about from the perspective of the sexually violated woman, but rarely from the viewpoint of the abuse experienced by the male.[25] Besides being made to reproduce on command to a number of women, the other issue is that such a practice prevented and even foreclosed the male from knowing his children. It was common for slaves to not know who their fathers were. The main point is that such a breeding practice is inherently abusive to female as well as male slaves, and the toll this took on males needs to be more broadly recognized in the historical scholarship.

An equally egregious form of sexual abuse is the sexual assaults that male slaves had to endure. They were sexually abused and taken advantage of by White females and males alike. It is clear that White women had sexual relations with Black males; while some of these sexual relationships were based on affection, given the context of slavery and the taboo associated with Black and White sexual couplings, it could be easily argued that coercion was necessarily a component of such sexual liaisons. A paucity of scholarship exists on the sexual abuse of male slaves by White women. Historian Thomas Foster puts it best by stating, "Few scholars, however, have viewed

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[24] Thomas Foster, "The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 3 (2011): 456.
[25] *Ibid*, 456.

the relationships of enslaved men and free White women through the lens of sexual abuse in part because of gendered assumptions about sexual power."[26] Black men were clearly in a precarious situation and therefore vulnerable to a whole host of punishments, including, but not limited to, being sold, beaten, whipped, castrated, genitally mutilated, to being killed. Besides White women's sexual coercion and abuse of Black male slaves, White masters would engage in same-sex sexual abuse. As with White women and male slaves, it is possible that some masters and bondsmen expressed affection for one another and therefore sexual activities between them would appear to be "consensual," this could hardly be possible given the power relations between masters and their slaves. More extreme examples of sexual abuse included masters being sexual with male slaves as a form of punishment and humiliation, and the most extreme of these acts involved the male slaves being sodomized.

Even though slaves' sexuality was largely controlled and impacted by slave owners, in their own right, slaves—depending on their living situations and the approach and sensibilities of individual slave owners—developed their own sexual customs and family culture. Overall, slaves did not have an issue with premarital sexuality activity. Even though slaves were not officially and legally able to marry, they had courtship rituals and engaged in commitment ceremonies. Historians John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman have noted, "As the property of their masters, slaves did not have the legal right to contract marriage, but they nevertheless performed marriage rituals ranging from jumping over a broomstick to Christian wedding ceremonies performed by Black or White preachers."[27] Some historians in the past downplayed the fact that slave culture had sexual mores and a commitment to marriage and/or the family unit.

POST SLAVERY: JIM CROW AND BLACK SEXUALITY

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[26] *Ibid, 459.*

[27] John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*
(New York: Harper & Row, 1988): 99.

The end of slavery ushered in an equally ominous era regarding Black sexuality. It is true that Black sexuality has been treated as uncivilized and suspect since Europeans came into contact with Africans. Before and during slavery both early American societal views and legal prohibitions against miscegenation varied quite a bit depending upon the historical period and geographical area. As time progressed, such sexual unions were widely discouraged and even widely prohibited by law. During slavery Black sexuality was largely controlled and dictated by slave owners. When slavery was outlawed and dismantled in the mid-1860s, Black sexuality was deeply feared more than ever before. More specifically, D'Emilio and Freedman indicate that "the dismantling of slavery initiated a new and terrifying era in Southern race relations in which sexuality became one of the central means of reasserting White social control over Blacks"[28] The postbellum era was an extraordinarily difficult time for Black Americans.

The attitudes and views of many White Americans about Black sexuality after chattel slavery ended were similar to those held during the more than two-hundred years of the institution of slavery. However, the animosity against Blacks by Whites was at an all-time high. A White supremacist organization, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), originally founded in 1865, paralleled with both the ending of slavery and the conclusion of the Civil War. By 1870 the KKK had infiltrated nearly every Southern state. This proliferation of the KKK was principally focused on protecting White women against the alleged sexual predation of Black men. It was common for the KKK to terrorize Black men, women, and children. Black men ran the risk of being lynched with even so much as a whisper that they violated White women's purity by having sex with them. Many of those who were prejudiced against interracial sex between Black men and White women viewed such sexual contact as *de facto* rape by Black men. The response of the KKK was swift and decisive: lynching, sexual assaults, and genital mutilations of Black men were frighteningly familiar in the American South. Patricia Hill Collins asserts that "Lynching and rape emerged as two interrelated, gender-specific forms of sexual

[28] Ibid*,* 104.

violence. Perceptions of Black hypersexuality occupied an increasingly prominent place in American science, popular culture, religious traditions, and state policies."[29] In fact, lynchings were the main form of sexual and social control and punishment: from 1889 to 1940 about 3,800 Black individuals were lynched.[30]

Black men and women continued to be viewed as having unquenchable sexual appetites well into the twentieth century and such stereotypes often led to harm. It was common for such hypersexual images of Black men and women to be depicted in television programs, movies, and other visual representations.[31] While Black men were targets of racialized violence including lynchings, women were subjected to sexual harassment and sexual assault by White men. The White imagination formed stereotypes of Black women as being sexually unrestrained, and this narrative gave White men license to do whatever they wanted to do sexually to these women. Specifically, as a holdover from the slavery period, the image developed of the Jezebel, a light-skinned Black woman who was purported to be lascivious and favored by White men. Such a sexualized image of the Jezebel was consistently portrayed in twentieth-century popular culture. For instance, sexualized images of these women were displayed in objectifying ways: "Everyday items—such as ashtrays, postcards, sheet music, fishing lures, drinking glasses, and so forth—depicted naked or scantily dressed Black women lacking modesty and sexual restraint."[32] On the other end of the spectrum from the Jezebel is the stereotype of an asexual black mammy. The mammy is just as pervasive (if not more so) in American culture. She is the unfeminine, large, "faithful, obedient domestic servant," and while she can be "well loved" as White children's primary caregiver, she is asexual and unthreatening to the White family structure.

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[29] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*, 63.

[30] John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America,* 216, and John P. Elia, "Sexuality," in *The World of Jim Crow: Arts to Housing and Community* (Volume 1)*,* ed. Steven A. Reich (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2019), 210.

[31] David Pilgrim, "The Jezebel Stereotype," https://ferris.edu/jimcrow/jezebel/, Accessed on August 10, 2019. 2002 (Last modified in 2012), para 14.

[32] Ibid.

However, despite her obedience, if pushed past her limits of patience, the mammy figure could also "wield considerable authority" in the White family as well as in her own home.[33] Similar to the Jezebel, the mammy's image harms Black women in the sense that White Southerners would argue that White men weren't sexually attracted to black women, because they are mammies; however, if there were a sexual liaison, it was solely due to the Black woman's status as a hypersexual Jezebel. A male corollary to the mammy figure is the "Uncle Tom," based on the character from Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The mention of an "Uncle Tom" conjures up images of "an old man who is meek, submissive, doesn't stick up for himself, [and who is] desexualized."[34] Unlike the powerful black male who struck fear of cuckoldry into white men's hearts, the Uncle Tom is the pure embodiment of obedience, not to mention that he is entirely non-threatening to White men and therefore does not risk the wrath from which stronger Black men faced.

Even a cursory examination of how African Americans were viewed and treated regarding sexual matters reveals consistently racist and generally negative portrayals. The twentieth century was filled with examples—far too numerous to recount here given space limitations—that were not only prominent in the American South, but also throughout the United States. Besides depictions of Black women as barbaric, carnal, and overtly sexual on swizzle sticks, postcards, and other items found in daily life, other aspects of prejudice and disregard existed for African Americans. Three significant occurrences regarding sexual matters that had national attention were the film *Birth of a Nation*, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, and the Emmett Till tragedy. These three examples show the widespread fear and exaggeration of Black sexuality.

Birth of a Nation is a well-known yet highly controversial film that was released in early 1915 and directed and co-produced by D.W. Griffith and Harry Aiken. It is based on a novel entitled *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*

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[33] Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990, pp. 71-72.
[34] Gregory M. Lamb,"What We've Made of Uncle Tom," *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 October 2002 (vol. 94, no. 235): 17.

(1905) written by Thomas Dixon, Jr. Principally, *Birth of a Nation* focuses on the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and the details of a relationship between a Northern family (the Stonemans) and a Southern family (the Camerons) during a segment of the Civil War and the Reconstruction periods. This film was controversial from its inception, and its history has been complicated not to mention its exaggerated treatment of Black sexuality. What is important to note, however, is that this film boldly reinforces negative stereotypes about Black people. It pictures Black males as simpletons who were sexually unrestrained toward White women. Part of the film pictures Mr. Stoneman's mistress, Lydia Brown, a jezebel, who was not only libidinous, but also calculating and scheming. In other words, this film "re-energized" and perpetuated the very worst impressions and stereotypes of Black sexuality and Black individuals as a whole. *Birth of a Nation* was prominently featured across the nation and was bitterly contested. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked diligently to ban this film to no avail. Perhaps the most critical point is that *Birth of a Nation* is credited with galvanizing the revival of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the twentieth century. As we know, one of the major reasons why the KKK originated was due, in large part, to the deep-seated White fear and anxiety of Black men being sexual with White women, and the concerted effort to keep miscegenation firmly in place. This longstanding racism had deleterious effects on African Americans' mental and physical health, not to mention the broader social implications of such bad treatment.

Another nationwide example of racist practices involving Black sexuality was the "Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male" (more generally known as the "Tuskegee Study" or "Tuskegee Syphilis Study"). This study—the way it was designed and carried out—was at the intersection of sexuality and public health. While details of this study are widely available, what is critical to understand is that 399 African American men with syphilis in Macon County, Alabama (and another 201 African American men without syphilis who served as controls in the study) were impacted. This study was sponsored by the United States Public Health Service (U.S.P.H.S.) and ran for four decades, from 1932 to 1972. Essentially, this study focused on observing

how untreated syphilis affected the physical health of these men. A host of problematic aspects occurred with this study, not the least of which involved the ethical dimensions.[35] The men who served as research subjects[36] were deceived. When the researchers from the U.S.P.H.S. approached these men in the early 1930s, the investigators indicated that they were offering treatments for "Bad Blood," a medical term used in the past to indicate a vague diagnosis referring to a number of illnesses. In the communications from the Macon County Health Department to patients, they promised "special free treatment" and stressed that the follow-up visits would be their "last chance" for a "good examination."[37] But this was not the case. These men were merely being monitored at best, and no such treatment was given for syphilis. Treatments for syphilis were available in the 1930s and, even more importantly, penicillin was widely available to treat this disease and other infections in the early

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[35] For a broad overview of the "Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male" and the details about the ethical concerns of the study, see, for example, Allan Brandt, "Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment," in *Tuskegee's Truths: Rethinking the Tuskegee Syphilis Study*, ed. Susan M. Reverby (University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 15-33; James H Jones, *Bad Blood* (Simon & Schuster, 1993); Thomas Parran, *Shadow on the Land* (Waverly, 1939); Susan M. Reverby, ed., *Tuskegee's Truths: Rethinking the Tuskegee Syphilis Study* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

[36] The use of the term "research subjects" is purposeful here. It is currently correct to use the term "research participants" and not "research subjects." However, to suggest that the men used in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study were "research participants" suggests that they had informed consent, and that was not the case. They were used as "human guinea pigs" and were deceived throughout the entire duration of the study.

[37] For the original Tuskegee Syphilis Study Recruitment Letter from Macon County's Health Department and an analysis, see Gwen Sharp, "Tuskegee Syphilis Study Recruitment Letter," https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2014/08/22/tuskegee-syphilis-study-recruitment-letter/, Accessed on October 13, 2019.

1940s. Nevertheless, these research subjects were made to forgo effective medical treatment as their bodies were ravaged by syphilis over the years. Many subjects died from complications of syphilitic infections. This study was permitted to continue until 1972 until Peter Buxton, a U.S.P.H.S. venereal disease investigator in San Francisco, exposed the U.S.P.H.S. experiment. Buxton learned of the details of the study and blew the whistle to a journalist friend, who released the details to an Associated Press journalist, Jean Heller, who then published a newspaper article in the *New York Times*,[38] and the study was discontinued at once. This study is considered by public health and history of medicine scholars to be one of the most egregious medical experiments in United States history. The alleged reason for the study was to ascertain how the progression of untreated syphilis differed in Black males compared to White males.[39]

Although the Tuskegee Syphilis Study took place in the South, it had national implications and impacted Black sexuality and African American sexual health. First of all, the research subjects were Black men located in the American South. Clearly, Black men and their sexuality were seen as problematic, and in some ways they were viewed as unimportant and even disposable. Additionally, these men ended up causing secondary infections in their sex partners and in some cases in their unborn children. When this study fully came to light, it created significant mistrust in health care providers in general and specifically those providers who worked in the area of sexual health. This effect was a horrific blow to Black communities across the nation. Research on Black sexuality in general continues to reflect badly on African Americans.

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[38] Jean Heller, "Syphilis Victims in U.S. Study Went Untreated for 40 Years." *New York Times* (25 July 1972): 8.

[39] In 1928 there was a Norwegian retrospective study on Caucasian men who suffered from untreated syphilis and how it impacted their bodies. As a retrospective study, the Norwegian study was not the same as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study methodologically. Researchers found in the Norwegian study that untreated syphilis caused neurological damage. It was thought by the Tuskegee researchers that Black men would most likely suffer more from cardiac issues given their assumed lack of intellectual sophistication due to their presumed inferiority.

A third example involved a fourteen-year-old African American youth named Emmett Till. Born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, young Emmett went to visit his relatives in the Delta Region of Mississippi in the summer of 1955. On one late August day he went into a local grocery store owned by a White couple named Carolyn and Roy Bryant. Allegedly, Emmett whistled at Carolyn and uttered some sexually suggestive words directed at her, and there was even the suggestion that he grabbed Carolyn in a lewd way. Carolyn was the only one working in the main part of the store that day; reportedly, there was another woman working in the back portion of the store who reported not hearing any of the supposed verbal exchanges between Emmett and Carolyn. However, some nights following the incident in the grocery story, Carolyn's husband, Roy, and his half-brother, J.W. Milam, went over to Till's great-uncle's home where Emmett was staying, and kidnapped him at gun point. Roy and J.M. beat Emmett viciously and mercilessly after which time they lynched him and then tied a heavy fan made of metal around Emmett's neck and dumped him in the Tallahatchie River. The men had no evidence that any of these actions were taken by Till toward Bryant, and in fact, following Roy and J.W.'s arrest, Carolyn's lawyer kept handwritten notes of their interview, which became the first written statement of the precipitating events: "she charged only that Till had 'insulted' her, not grabbed her, and certainly not attempted to rape her. The documents prove that there was a time when she did seem to know what had happened, and a time soon afterward when she became the mouthpiece of a monstrous lie."[40]When Emmett's body was discovered in the river, his body was terribly disfigured. Emmett's mother, Mamie Bradley, insisted that her son's body be returned to Chicago for an open casket viewing to make the point about the racism and unspeakable hate crime from which her son suffered. Emmett Till's murder galvanized civil rights actions across the nation.

Even after more than sixty years, system racism continues regarding the Emmett Till case. In July 2019, a photograph appeared on Instagram of three young White men standing with a rifle and a shotgun in front of a commemorative sign marking the

[40] Timothy B. Tyson, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017): 7.

location where Emmett Till's dead body was retrieved from the Tallahatchie River. Such an act of disrespect resulted in the suspension of the three students from their University of Mississippi fraternity, and federal authorities are investigating the incident.[41] There have been many instances of vandalism to the commemorative signage over many years since it was first put up in 2007, 52 years after Till was murdered. It has been peppered with bullet holes a number of times and the signage was even stolen on one occasion.[42] The Emmett Till case illustrates perhaps like no other example how racially charged the Jim Crow South was, and in many ways continues to be, and how even fabricated or exaggerated accounts of Black males' sexual impropriety—as defined by Southern White supremacist culture—could end in deadly consequences. It is the ultimate pathologization of Black sexuality. While this is the most extreme manifestation of negativity about Black sexuality, there clearly have been other ways negativity and pathologization have played out, including how bio-medical and health research on Black sexuality has been framed and carried out. Clearly, White males' fear of Black men's sexuality to the point of violence did not end with the Emancipation Proclamation.

Sexology as a field of knowledge has by and large negatively treated Black sexuality, and McGruder reveals that many studies involving the sexuality of Black

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[41] Jerry Mitchell, "Ole Miss Students Posed with Guns in Front of Emmett Till's Memorial. DOJ May Investigate," https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2019/07/25/ole-miss-students-posed-guns-front-emmett-till-memorial/1829450001/, Accessed on October 7, 2019. (Last Modified July 29, 2019), para 1 and *passim.* It should be noted that commemorative sign pictured in this article was previously riddled with bullet holes.

[42] To glean a history of how the commemorative signage has been intentionally damaged and disrespected, see, for example, a brief CNN written account by Jessica Campisi and Brandon Griggs entitled "Emmett Till's Memorial Sign was Riddled with Bullet Holes. 35 Days after being Replaced, It was Shot Up Again" (August 6, 2018), which may be retrieved at https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/06/us/emmett-till-sign-vandalized-trnd/index.html, Accessed October 13, 2019

people have presented Black sexuality as non-normative[43] due to an overwhelming number of research studies that have pathologized Black sexuality by focusing on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS. While researchers are calling attention to the rates of STIs in the Black population, sex researchers often do not provide context and underlying reasons why lack of trust in the medical community may well be a reason. McGruder points out how historical factors involving racism, poverty, and other inequities have been at work, serving as mechanisms to keep the incidence and prevalence of STIs (including HIV/AIDS) disproportionately higher than in other ethnic populations and in Whites. There is little doubt that the ways in which contemporary sexological research on Black sexual matters is framed both results from, and perpetuates, the deep historical roots of how Black sexuality has been portrayed as non-normative and even dangerous. From a social justice perspective, it is critically important that research studies on STIs in the Black population be routinely and thoroughly contextualized and historicized to unearth the root causes of these excessively high rates of STI transmission and sexual health disparities in the Black populace. Ultimately, it is crucial that such sexual health disparities be mitigated as well as to halt framing and perpetuating—even unwittingly—the notion that Black sexuality is non-normative.

A history of sexual marginalization created a certain amount of disassociation from sexuality for Black people. Additionally, African American churches have espoused a sex-negative view and have been known to be particularly harsh on LGBTQ members. Sexual prejudice (e.g., biphobia, homophobia) has been a strong component of the majority of African American churches and the messages they have imparted to their followers. It is clear that these churches promoted "Victorian ideals of respectability."[44] The main point is that "These conservative sexual attitudes were particularly prevalent in faith communities such as African American churches."[45]

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[43] Kevin McGruder, "Black Sexuality in the U.S.: Presentations as Non-Normative," *Journal of African American Studies* 13 (2009), 253, *passim*.
[44] Rachel and Thrasher, "Black Sexuality in the United States," para 18.
[45] *Ibid*

COUNTERING THE NEGATIVITY ABOUT BLACK SEXUALITY

While it is important to mark the systemic racism that has pointed to mainstream society's discomfort and fear of Black sexuality, it is equally as important to discuss actions that have fought against such injustices. It is absolutely true that Black people and their communities have been maltreated by hundreds of years of racism that have caused both symbolic and material harm. The injustices done by castigating Black individuals for their sexuality have been unconscionable. Such abuses in the forms of microaggressions and macroaggressions have had significant detrimental impacts. There is no question about how profoundly Black individuals and their communities have suffered from racism and how that translated, in part, into demonizing their sexuality. That history is real and needs to be respected and in no way covered up or misrepresented. At the same time, it is also important to point out how Black people and their allies responded and fought back in response to the prejudice and discrimination regarding Black sexual matters.

In a number of ways, resistance to fight against racism has been both realized and effective. One such example is the NAACP's response to *Birth of a Nation*. While it is true that many of the goals of the NAACP including censoring the film did not take hold, a number of other benefits for the NAACP and civil rights came as a result of organizing against the film. In the very early years of its existence, the NAACP focused predominantly on problematic issues that occurred almost exclusively in the South such as housing segregation and lynchings.[46] However, once *Birth of a Nation* was released, protests occurred all over the United States, as this film was a national phenomenon and relevant to more than one specific geographical area. Historian Stephen Weinberger put it best by asserting, "What is perhaps most interesting and important

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[46] Stephen Weinberger, "*The Birth of a Nation* and the Making of the NAACP." *Journal of American Studies* 45, no. 1 (2011): 92.

about the campaign against *Birth* is that while it did not achieve its goals, it transformed the NAACP in ways no one could have anticipated."[47]

The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s constituted many African American writers, artists, and social critics who questioned and challenged the pervasive stereotypes, racism, discrimination, and prejudice that haunted Black people from the slavery era well into the Jim Crow period in American history. Besides the overarching cultural work that the Harlem Renaissance achieved, it showed progress in the area of Black sexuality, as "we now know that many of the most significant participants within the Renaissance were… [gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer people] who found unprecedented amounts of social and intellectual freedom in 1920s New York, not to mention places like Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta."[48] Such writers as Langston Hughes and Richard Bruce Nugent included queer themes in their writings, and Blues singer Gladys Bentley often performed in drag. Additionally, drag balls held during this period included hundreds of individuals who were cross-dressed. These are merely a few of the numerous individuals who contributed to this rich historical period. The cultural work that resulted certainly challenged the hegemonic narrative that long haunted Black Americans generally and more specifically about their sexuality.

Long before the successes of striking down the miscegenation laws nationally with the Supreme Court ruling on the *Loving v. Virginia* case, fearless Black activists existed. A prime example of such courage in the face of savage and deadly racism were Black feminists. One such activist was Ida B. Wells (1862-1931), a journalist, "who not only exploded the myth of bestial, White-female-obsessed Black brute but who also established remarkably sophisticated ways of thinking of lynching as a means of controlling newly emancipated—and partially enfranchised—Black American populations."[49] A number of other Black activists spoke out against anti-Black sentiment connected to Black sexuality. Black icons W.E.B. Dubois (1868-1963), Mary Church

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[47] *Ibid* .
[48] Robert Reid-Pharr, "Sexuality," in *Encyclopedia of African American History: 1899 to the Present—From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-First Century* (Volume 4), ed. Paul Finkelman (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 297.
[49] Robert Reid-Pharr, "Sexuality," 297.

Terrell (1863-1954), and Walter Francis White (1893-1955) were champions who specifically challenged the stereotype of the uncivilized Black male who sexually preyed on White women.[50]

Another positive turn occurred when miscegenation laws nationwide were overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. The last vestige of segregation laws was ruled unconstitutional in the famous court case of *Loving v. Virginia* in June of 1967.[51] As a result of this Supreme Court ruling, all laws that banned marriages between individuals of mixed racial heritage were null and void. This finding freed individuals to marry whom they wished irrespective of the racial makeup of both people in the relationship. The case was a major victory considering the entrenched widespread belief and legal backing that White and Black individuals could not have interracial sex.

Another factor that helped to liberate Black sexuality is the corpus of scholarship on the topic, including E. Patrick Johnson's works, *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (2005), *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South: An Oral History* (2008), and *Black. Queer. Southern. Women.: An Oral History* (2018). These works represent a larger body of scholarship that serves to illuminate not only Black sexuality, but also non-heterosexual Black sexual and romantic liaisons. This body of work, not to mention other contributions by Black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, and others, engages in critical and important conversations about Black sexuality. Black feminists, for example, provided a theoretical lens to examine oppression referred to as intersectionality. This tool continues to be a major contribution as it examines how individuals experience oppression differently based on their social location in terms of their sexuality, gender, class, race, ability, and religion, among other identities. By using this framework, sexuality scholars have been able to analyze oppression, such as sexual prejudice, in more nuanced and meaningful ways.

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[50] *Ibid.*

[51] Peter Wallenstein, "The Right to Marry: *Loving v. Virginia*." *OAH Magazine of History* 9, no. 2 (1995): 41.

Issues of Black sexuality have surfaced in many other ways through popular culture. It has been a "mixed bag" in terms of perpetuating old, harmful stereotypes on the one hand or being liberatory on the other hand. Yet, some representations cannot be so neatly categorized in one camp or the other. Hollywood movies have portrayed Black sexuality in various ways, and music icons such as Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, Janet Jackson, Marvin Gaye, Prince, and others have lyrics in their songs that get at the heart of sex and relationships. How about rap and hip-hop artists and their messages about (Black) sexuality? How have they contributed to the discourse on Black sexuality? How about incidents that have spurred discussion such as when Magic Johnson was diagnosed with HIV,[52] or the Congressional hearings that ensued when Clarence Thomas was being nominated to be an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and Anita Hill brought charges of sexual harassment? How about popular television programs that feature African Americans? How about the notion of the "Down Low" that was originally discussed as an African American male phenomenon in which presumably otherwise straight men would have sexual contact with other men in a clandestine fashion? While space constraints do not allow for fuller details, descriptions, and analyses of these various popular cultural representations of Black sexuality, they are certainly worthy of detailed analysis in terms of how they have influenced our views and discourses about Black sexuality in U.S. society.

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[52] Magic Johnson's diagnosis of HIV and his nearly thirty years of living with the disease could seemingly have served as a positive role model for African Americans who were distrustful of the medical community. However, older generations are dubious of Johnson's illness, suspecting that the announcement was a publicity stunt instead of an actual diagnosis; younger generations presume that Magic Johnson's wealth has enabled his access to the best drugs and treatment. See, for example, Patricia B Wright, Katharine E. Stewart, Geoffrey M. Curran, and Brenda M. Booth. "A Qualitative Study of Barriers to the Utilization of HIV Testing Services Among Rural African American Cocaine Users." *Journal of drug issues* 43, no. 3 (2013): 314-334. This article may be retrieved at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3772639/

CONCLUSION

Much more work must be done in terms of scholarly treatments of Black sexuality. There continues to be affronts to Black sexuality in American culture.[53] If this chapter explored the major (certainly not all) themes in the history of Black sexuality in the United States and identified points in history when culturally dominant views, stereotypes, and prejudice have been challenged in an attempt to achieve social and sexual justice for African Americans related to their sexuality, then I have achieved what I intended to accomplish. Rather than being a comprehensive compendium of Black sexuality, this chapter covers major events that have run throughout the history of Black sexuality in the United States in order to paint a broad picture of the challenges and achievements surrounding Black sexual issues.

[53] For a comprehensive coverage of the challenges that Black sexuality faces in contemporary American society, see, for example, Stacey Patton's essay "Who's Afraid of Black Sexuality?" (*The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 59, no.15, December 3, 2012).

Discussion Questions

1. How did stereotypes and treatment of Black people before slavery result in poor treatment regarding their sexuality?
2. Describe how slaves were sexually abused and how this practice demonstrated the masters' control over slaves' lives.
3. Identify and discuss various achievements in the twentieth century related to Black sexuality and how they countered old and harmful stereotypes about Black people's sexuality. Which of these achievements were more effective than others in promoting sexual and social justice? Provide reasons for your views.
4. Moving forward, how can we achieve even greater social and sexual justice for Black individuals and their communities? Use historical context to develop your ideas.

Writing Prompt

How has the historically documented bad treatment of African Americans' sexuality harmed them symbolically and materially? What historical events have helped to mitigate against the sexual prejudice from which African Americans and their communities have suffered? What historical events in the history of Black sexuality in the United States has impacted Black people, their communities, and their allies most? Provide reasons for your assertions and ideas.

Chapter 6

Race, Identity, and Choice: Black Voices on Liberia and the American Colonization Society

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Introduction

Africa's Republic of Liberia began as a colony founded by the decedents of Africans who were born both free and enslaved in the Americas. From the 1820s through 1840s, the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America transported thousands of formerly enslaved African Americans to the coast of West Africa. The American Colonization Society (ACS), as it was more commonly known, was established by White Americans, not African Americans, and controlled the colony of Liberia until 1847. The general historical narrative often treats Liberia with rose-colored glasses tinted with American exceptionalism. As Africa's first independent nation of the modern era, Liberia's very name derives from its national motto: "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here." Daniel Bashiel Warner, who was born in Baltimore County, Maryland before immigrating to Liberia as a child, similarly described the country as "a home of glorious liberty" in Liberia's national anthem. Highlighting its American roots, Liberia's flag is even based on the flag of the United States, featuring alternating red and white stripes, and a blue canton with a white star.[1]

[1] Thomas Streissguth, *Liberia in Pictures* (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2006), 69.

In reality, the history and legacy of Liberian colonization is far more complicated. Not only did the ACS's leadership often embrace White supremacist ideals, but the founders of Liberia paid no heed to the region's indigenous population whose land was taken for the colonial experiment. Historian Ousmane Power-Greene goes so far as to call the ACS an "antiblack" organization.[2] Not only was immigration to Africa sometimes involuntary, but the leaders of the emergent Americo-Liberian culture often repeated the sins of the United States, transporting White supremacist ideas about African culture instead of establishing the equality so greatly desired by African Americans in the United States. This chapter includes a variety of African American perspectives regarding ACS and repatriation, with particular attention to Paul Cuffe, James Forten, Martin Delany, and Frederick Douglass. Additionally, it explores the lived experience of those African Americans who became part of the colony of Liberia and, later, the independent Republic of Liberia.

Background

The history of Liberia is not often included in American history and, when it is addressed, it is typically limited to the founding of the American Colonization Society in 1817 and the establishment of Liberia on January 6, 1822. Those five years represent a narrow depiction of the American Colonization Society and the Liberian experiment. Among those who returned to Africa were recently emancipated slaves transported against their will as well as lifelong free men and women from both the North and South.

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[2] Ousmane K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide The African American Struggle against the Colonization Movement* (New York: New York University Press), 2014.

This included wealthy Black entrepreneurs, who voluntarily went to establish new lives in their ancestral homeland. The history of the United States and Liberia continued well after the signing of the Liberian Declaration of Independence on July 26, 1847 and includes Firestone rubber plantations, Hershey and Mars cocoa plantations, blood diamonds, and the conviction of Americo-Liberian Charles Taylor for crimes against humanity.

While this chapter is about the lived experiences of African Americans, it is important to acknowledge the perceptions and motivations of White supporters of African repatriation. Laws governing slavery served to dehumanize African Americans for economic gain and to prevent the likelihood of organized rebellions. So, for many White slaveholders, repatriation to Africa was touted as issue of public safety and the preservation of power. Their counterparts in the North similarly embraced the return of Black men and women to Africa, sometimes behind a facade of Christian morality, due to their own rejection of racial equality and social integration.[3]

While they may have opposed slavery, many White abolitionists "expressed horror at the very prospect of Black equality."[4] By colonizing Liberia, they saw an avenue to end slavery in America without having to address questions of racial equality or social integration with free Black men and women. Among Southern slaveholders, "the fear of servile insurrections was never absent from the minds of the people of the South."[5]

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[3] Thandeka, *Learning to Be White: Money, Race and God in America* (New York: Continuum Press, 1999).

[4] Richard S. Newman, *Black Founders: The Free Black Community in the Early Republic*. (Philadelphia: The Library Company of Philadelphia, 2008), 3.

[5] Joseph Cephas Carroll, *Slave Insurrections in the United States, 1800-1865* (Boston: Chapman and Grimes, 1938), 19.

Conservatively, there were more than two hundred and fifty revolts involving more than ten slaves in American history. These numbers do not include individual acts of rebellion, smaller incursions, undocumented actions, or attempted insurrections that did not materialize.

One of those unmaterialized revolts was Gabriel's Rebellion in 1800. After Gabriel Prosser's plot was discovered, the government of Virginia briefly discussed repatriating Black Americans to Africa, an idea that would become the obsession of a prominent White Virginian, Charles Fenton Mercer, a decade later.[6] It was in this environment that Black and White Americans both in the South and the North began discussing the repatriation of African Americans to West Africa. Ultimately, Robert Finley and Samuel J. Mills, both of whom were influential White ministers, established the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America in Washington, D.C., on December 21, 1816. Just four years later, in 1820, the American Colonization Society began transporting free African Americans to the coast of West Africa.

African Americans and Repatriation to Africa

America's Black population had divergent opinions on repatriation. Some even supported a separate Black colony within continental U.S. territories. For example, in 1817, free African Americans in Richmond, Virginia, asked the United States government to give Black families land west of the Mississippi River. However, the government feared

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[6] Jason T. Sharples, *The World that Fear Made: Slave Revolts and Conspiracy Scares in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

an alliance between Native Americans and African Americans, which would threaten White continental hegemony. To this end, ACS Secretary Elias B. Caldwell rejected "the practicability of colonization" within the American continent, predicting alliances with "Indians, or the nations bordering on our frontiers, in case of war" and the likelihood that a Black Homeland "would become the asylum of fugitives and runaway slaves."[7]

While an estimated thirteen percent of America's Black population was free in the early nineteenth century, the population of free African Americans was not homogenous. There were free Black men and women in both the South and the North who had divergent levels of education and socioeconomic backgrounds. This chapter will explore the perspectives of four specific African American freedmen regarding the Liberian experiment: Paul Cuffe (1759-1817), James Forten (1766-1842), Martin Delany (1812-1885), and Frederick Douglass (1817-1895). These are the lived experiences of men who discussed, argued, and wrote to each other to understand better the virtues and dangers of immigration to West Africa. It should be noted that these perspectives are limited by gender and economic status.[8]

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[7] "Meeting of Free People of Color of Richmond, Virginia," 1817, in William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization: or an impartial exhibition of the Doctrines, Principles & Purposes of the American Colonization Society. Together with Resolutions, Addresses & Remonstrances of the Free People of Color* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832); Matthew Mason, Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 113.

[8] Frankie Hutton, "Economic considerations in the American Colonization Society's early effort to emigrate free blacks to Liberia, 1816–36," *The Journal of African History*, 12:1 (1983), 45–59.

While the experiences of African Americans in agricultural labor are well-known, at least ten percent of both enslaved and free Black labor was in maritime industries.[9] Born free in Massachusetts, Paul Cuffe, for example, was one of the most acclaimed sailors of his generation. His mother was a member of the Wampanoag Nation, and his father was a member of Africa's Ashanti who was enslaved and brought to the auction block in Newport, Rhode Island. A successful mariner and devout Quaker, Cuffe became focused on "rescuing enslaved peoples from America and establishing a homeland in Africa which would also, it was believed, have the effect of bringing Christian faith and 'civilisation' to the people of Africa." Note the dual motivation of rescuing enslaved Americans as well as bringing Christianity and "civilization" to West Africa. In 1811, Cuffe captained the ship *Traveller* with an all-Black crew to Sierra Leone to explore the British colony and repatriate Black Loyalists who had fought against the United States during the American Revolution. Unfortunately, the War of 1812 interrupted his plans, but on December 10, 1815, Cuffe set sail for Africa with thirty-eight free African American colonists. Cuffe financed most of the expedition himself. Upon his return to the United States, he was recruited by Robert Finley and Samuel J. Mills to share information with the newly formed American Colonization Society.[10]

Like Cuffe, James Forten was a successful Black businessman also engaged in maritime industries. A freeman from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Forten worked as a

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[9] W. Jeffery Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1997.
[10] Paul Walker, "Captain Paul Cuffe (1759–1817): Nineteenth-Century African American Seafarer and Entrepreneur," *Black Theology* 13:3 (2015), 222.

privateer and in shipyards before becoming a successful sailmaker. He strongly opposed the American Colonization Society because he believed African Americans had a birthright to the United States, and he refused to abandon a nation built on the backs of the enslaved who had yet to taste freedom. Moreover, Forten believed that the ACS was disingenuous and had an ulterior motive: "They think that the slave holders wants [sic] to get rid of them so as to make their property more secure."[11] A business supporter of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, Forten convinced an initially vacillating Garrison to also oppose repatriation. Forten served as Vice-President of Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society, which was open to both Black and White Americans, including prominent national figures like Susan B. Anthony, Samuel Cornish, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In addition, Forten's daughters married the brothers of a prominent biracial abolitionist family in Philadelphia.[12]

Martin Delany belonged to the same generation as Forten's daughters. A free African American from Charles Town, Virginia (now West Virginia), Delany coined the Pan-African slogan "Africa for Africans." After training as a physician's assistant in Pittsburgh in 1850, he became one of the first three Black students admitted to Harvard Medical School but was dismissed following complaints by White students. These experiences, combined with his firsthand witness of Southern slavery during an 1839 tour, influenced his advocacy of Black Nationalism, separation, and self-sufficiency. While

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[11] Cited in Rosalind Cobb Wiggins, *Captain Paul Cuffe's Logs and Letters, 1808-1817* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1996).
[12] Julie Winch, "The Making and Meaning of James Forten's Letters from A Man of Colour," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 64:1 (2007), 1-6.

Delany worked alongside Frederick Douglass on the *North Star* newspaper, he has historically been characterized as a foil to Douglass: Douglass the Assimilationist versus Delany the Separatist.[13] At the same time, however, Delany joined Douglass in opposing the American Colonization Society, arguing that the organization was "one of the most arrant enemies of the colored man, ever seeking to discomfit him, and envying him of every privilege that he may enjoy." Delany would not only visit Liberia, he even negotiated a potential land-share agreement between African Americans and the indigenous people of Abeokuta (located in modern-day Nigeria). These plans would soon after be discarded with the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War. Delany returned to the United States to fight against pro-slavery Confederates, becoming the first Black field grade officer of the United States Army. A decade following the war and the sustained failure of the United States to offer long overdue equality to Black Americans, Delany resumed his advocacy for Liberian immigration, co-founding the South Carolina-based Liberia Exodus Joint Stock Steamship Company.[14]

Unlike Cuffe, Forten, and Delany, Frederick Douglass was born into slavery. After successfully running away from Maryland, Douglass partnered with William Lloyd Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society and quickly emerged as one of the nation's most eloquent and fierce orators against slavery as well as the racist motivations behind the

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[13] Robert Steven Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
[14] Kunal M. Parker, *Making Foreigners: Immigration and Citizenship Law in America, 1600–2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Olivia B. Waxman, "Years Before the 'Send Her Back; Chants, This U.S.-Backed Effort Tried to Send Free Black Americans 'Back,'" *Time Magazine*, July 22, 2019.

ACS. While Douglass was a committed anti-colonialist, he was also a fierce critic of the U.S., including the discriminatory North where he lived, once saying to Garrison, "I have no love for America, as such; I have no patriotism. I have no country. What country have I? The Institutions of this country do not know me—do not recognize me as a man." As much as he rejected America's public facade as the birthplace of freedom, though, he believed that to abandon the United States by immigrating to Africa was to also abandon the millions of enslaved Black men and women in the South.[15]

The American Colonization Society

Douglass recognized that the American Colonization Society (ACS) was led by an eclectic partnership of Southern slaveholders and Northern religious leaders.[16] Although Robert Finley, a Presbyterian minister from New Jersey, later claimed credit for the idea of colonization, it is commonly believed that Finley organized the ACS at the behest of his brother-in-law, Elias Cardwell, who had been contacted by Charles Fenton Mercer (some sources have misidentified the brother-in-law as John Caldwell). Mercer had incidentally discovered that Virginia had once explored creating a colony for African Americans and became obsessed with colonization. Ultimately, Finley and Samuel J. Mills of Connecticut established the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America in Washington, D.C., on December 21, 1816.[17]

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[15] John Blassingame, et al., eds., *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One—Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Vol. II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 57.
[16] Bjorn F. Sillion Southard, *Peculiar Rhetoric: Slavery, Freedom, and the African Colonization Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019).
[17] Douglas R. Egerton, "'Its Origin Is Not a Little Curious': A New Look at the American Colonization Society," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5:4 (1985), 465-467, 471-472.

Four years later, in 1820, the American Colonization Society began transporting free African Americans to the coast of West Africa. But, while the ACS founders were both Northerners, its leaders were mostly slaveholding Southerners. Prominent supporters of the ACS included Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States Bushrod Washington (the nephew of President George Washington), former President James Monroe, future president Abraham Lincoln, and Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky, who owned enslaved African Americans. Elias Caldwell, the Clerk of the U.S. Supreme Court of the United States, and the brother-in-law of Robert Finley, became the Secretary of the American Colonization Society. One can still see the legacy of powerful White Americans etched onto maps of Liberia to this day, from its capital city Monrovia (named after President James Monroe) to cities that include Buchanan (named after Thomas Buchanan, cousin of President James Buchanan) and Clay-Ashland (named after Henry Clay's Lexington, Kentucky, home and plantation that enslaved dozens of Black men and women).[18]

Americo-Liberians

In 1820, the population of the United States was approximately 10 million, including 1.5 million African Americans. While African Americans heatedly debated the merits of the colonization movement, ultimately, 4,571 African Americans emigrated in the early years of the Liberian colony. The first expedition of 1820 carried eighty-six Black colonists to West Africa aboard the *Elizabeth*. Individual states also established

[18] J. Winston Coleman Jr., "Henry Clay, Kentucky and Liberia," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 45:154 (October, 1947), 309-322.

repatriation colonies along Africa's Pepper Coast, many of which bore Americanized names: Liberia, the Republic of Maryland, Kentucky in Africa, Mississippi in Africa, Louisiana, and two other colonies established by the Virginia Colonization Society and the Quaker Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania. These would later be annexed by the Republic of Liberia over subsequent decades. In total, by the start of the U.S. Civil War in 1860, approximately 13,000 Black men and women had emigrated from the United States to Liberia.[19]

African American immigrants to Liberia included Isaac Wright (1780–1846). Born enslaved in Baltimore, Maryland, Wright changed his name to Daniel Coker after escaping to New York, where he became a Methodist minister. Along with Richard Allen, he co-founded the American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Coker was even offered the position of first Bishop of the AME Church but deferred to Allen.[20] Numerous scholars have suggested that Coker was one of the two most strategic writers among the Black pamphleteers of the early nineteenth century, joining James Forten as a master of appealing to both Black and White audiences.[21] While Forten was an ardent anti-colonialist, Coker was open minded, even attending a lecture by Paul Cuffee regarding

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[19] James Fairhead, Tim Geysbeek, Svend E. Holsoe, and Melissa Leach, eds., *African-American Exploration in West Africa: Four Nineteenth Century Diaries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 10.
[20] James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 176.
[21] Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 10.

the British colony of Sierra Leone.[22] While Coker was originally against colonization, he eventually repatriated to Africa after a fallout with Richard Allen. He joined the first expedition of the American Colonization Society that settled in British Sierra Leone before ACS had negotiated with the indigenous West Africans for the land that eventually became Liberia.[23] He would spend the next two decades as one of Africa's first and most prolific Methodist missionaries.[24]

Another colonial missionary was Edward Jones (1807–1865), who was born a freeman in Charleston, South Carolina, to Jehu and Abigail Jones. His father was a freedman and successful tailor, real estate investor, and hotel owner. After becoming the first Black graduate from Amherst College, Jones travelled to Liberia as a missionary before permanently settling in the British colony of Sierra Leone.[25] Jones's interest in Africa was shared by Louis Sheridan (1766-1842) from nearby Blanden County, North Carolina.[26] Enslaved at birth, he was given his freedom as a young child by Joseph R. Gautier, who was likely his father.[27] Sheridan became a highly successful businessman and a personal friend with John Owen, the former Governor of North Carolina. A White

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[22] Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., "'To Be Truly Free': Louis Sheridan and the Colonization of Liberia," *Civil War History*, 29:4 (1983), 160.
[23] Rhondda R. Thomas, "Exodus and Colonization: Charting the Journey in the Journals of Daniel Coker, a Descendant of Africa," *African American Review*, 41:3 (2007), 507-519.
[24] Mac Dixon-Fyle and Gibril Raschid Cole, eds., *New Perspectives on the Sierra Leone Krio* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 95.
[25] Gatewood, 160.
[26] Claude Andrew Clegg, *The Price of Liberty* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 153.
[27] Catherine W. Bishir, "Sheridan, Thomas (ca. 1787-1864)," in *North Carolina Architects & Builders* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University Libraries, 2009).

contemporary commented that Sheridan was "honored and esteemed by all who know him."[28] Ironically, Sheridan owned several enslaved African Americans, though he once famously said, "I would die tomorrow to be free today." Originally opposed to colonization, Sheridan's position changed after the passage of new laws by the North Carolina legislature targeting free African Americans. By the 1830s, Sheridan had immigrated to Africa along with his former slaves. Perhaps the most successful Southern immigrant to Liberia, however, was Joseph Jenkins Roberts (1809-1876). Born free in Virginia, Roberts inherited his stepfather's shipping business that utilized flatboats along the James River. After moving to West Africa as a young man, he became the first African American Governor of Liberia in 1841 and, seven years later, the nation's first president.[29]

Given the prominent role of Henry Clay in advocating the colonization movement, it is no surprise that African Americans from Kentucky played a prominent role in Liberia's history, serving not only as leaders of colonial Liberia but other colonies such as Kentucky in Africa. Alfred Francis Russell (1817-1884), for instance, was born into slavery in Lexington, Kentucky, as the son of an enslaved mixed-race woman and a White man. Indeed, Russell was only 1/16th African and would have been legally considered "White" in many states, but not in Kentucky. In 1833, a fifteen-years-old Russel and his family were emancipated; they voluntarily moved to Liberia the same year. Another mixed-race Kentuckian, William Coleman (1842-1908) also immigrated to Liberia with his family as a child, and would go on to serve the African nation as the Speaker of the House of

[28] Gatewood, 160.
[29] Clegg, 158.

Representatives and its thirteenth president. His presidency was succeeded by another descendant of Black Kentuckians, Arthur Barclay, whose family had fled the United States during the Civil War.[30]

Like their Southern counterparts, Northern immigrants to Liberia included prominent and financially successful Black families. Edward James Roye, for instance, was born a freeman in Newark, Ohio, in 1815, as a full-blooded Igbo. His father died with a significant insurance policy, and Roye became instantly very wealthy. Following his immigration to Liberia, he would serve as the nation's Chief Justice and, later, president. One of the North's most well-known Black figures was John Brown Russwurm (1799–1851), who had been born in Jamaica to an English father and an enslaved African woman. With his father, Russwurm moved to Canada before settling in the United States. After becoming Bowdoin College's first Black graduate, Russwurm published the nation's first African American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in New York City with Samuel Eli Cornish. The duo published numerous articles opposing the colonization movement. However, Russwurm eventually had a change of heart regarding Liberia and wrote that "though some may be suspicious of the motives, still, all who know me will do me the justice to say, that the change in my views was - arising from a correction of error in my former opinion." He would subsequently spend the rest of his life in West Africa, where

[30] Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia, Vol. I* (New York: Central Book Company, 1947), 836.

he edited *The Liberia Herald* newspaper before becoming governor of the nearby colony of Maryland in Africa.[31]

Unfortunately, in the written record of Black perspectives regarding Liberia and the American Colonization Society, the voices of Black women are largely missing from the historical narrative. Mary Ann Shadd, for instance, was the first female Black publisher in North America and served as a leader of the abolitionist movement, but her exact views on repatriation are unclear. Similarly, the Forten daughters were prominent members of the abolitionist movement, but whether the sisters held the same anti-colonial attitudes as their father is unknown. While Anna Erskine is mentioned in Americo-Liberia history, her place in history seems relegated to her status as the granddaughter of Liberian President James Spriggs Payne and as the long-time partner of the renowned Liberian writer and diplomat Edward Wilmot Blyden. However, as historian Leslie Alexander notes, while the elite White and Black leadership of the ACS and West African colonies may have been entrenched in a patriarchal system that devalued the political voices of women, Black women of the era no doubt held the same myriad of perspectives on the virtues or limitations on repatriation to Africa as their male counterparts. While Black abolitionists from Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth to Sarah Redmond and Charlotte Forten are well known, we also know that there were scores of unnamed women who embraced Black Nationalism. These women participated in celebrations of their African heritage throughout the 1820s-1840s in New York City's Black pride parades that featured "African

[31] James Winston, *The Struggles of John Brown Russwurm: The Life and Writings of a Pan-Africanist Pioneer, 1799-1851* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 46.

music, clothing, colors, and banners." That some would also support the Liberian colonization experiment is not a far stretch.[32]

With a few notable exceptions, absent from the history of the American Colonization Society are also the voices of poor African Americans who either did not voluntarily choose immigration or did not rise their socio-economic status in Liberia. When Isaac Ross, for example, posthumously dissolved his plantation, he freed three hundred enslaved men and women, and the proceeds of the plantation's sale were designated to fund their transportation to Liberia.[33] No one asked the three hundred now "free" men and women their views on colonization. In one historians examination of Kentucky's thriving colonial movement among slave owners, he found that many enslaved people "were adverse to accepting freedom with the stipulation that they be deported" to West Africa, a far-off land rife with uncertainties that would also separate them from family members in the U.S. Upon arrival, many working class African Americans complained of the lack of access to farming tools, supplies to build homes, and an overabundance of snakes. One Kentucky emigrant to Liberia wrote home to an acquaintance, warning, "I cannot as a friend recommend him to come out here."[34]

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[32] Leslie M. Alexander, *African or American? Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784-1861* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 23, 51; for more on Black Nationalist support for African repatriation movements in the twentieth century, see Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
[33] Alan Huffman, *Mississippi in Africa: The Saga of the Slaves of Prospect Hill Plantation and Their Legacy in Liberia* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004).
[34] Coleman, 311-312, 319.

As previously noted, the motivations behind African American immigration to West Africa were diverse. Many had no say in their deportation, as the terms of their manumission from slavery mandated their relocation to Africa. Others, like John Russwurm and Martin Delany, embraced Black Nationalist ideals that rejected America's potential for racial equality and viewed complete separation from the U.S. as the only way to obtain a future for Black families. Some, like Daniel Coker and Edward Jones, saw Africa as ripe ground for Christian missionary work among native peoples.[35] The increasingly oppressive laws of the 1830s targeting free African Americans in the wake of Nat Turner's rebellion drove some, such as Louis Sheridan, to abandon the South for Liberia. Southern governments also put limits on the ability of Southerners to manumit enslaved African Americans. Some states banned the practice of manumission in wills, and others required state legislatures to approve all manumission. Approval of manumission frequently required immigration, so the "choice" offered was continued enslavement or deportation. Journalist Aryn Baker described Liberia as "founded by American statesmen in 1820 and populated, forcibly by some accounts, with former slaves." Whether it was called repatriation, immigration, or colonization, it was often a false, or forced, "freedom" for many African Americans. At the same time that the ACS reached its height of popularity among White elites, those same figures within state legislatures and the federal government were also ordering the removal of Native American populations from the South. Examining the Indian Removal Acts side-by-side

[35] Namata Blyden, "Edward Jones: An African American in Sierra Leone," in John Pulis, ed., *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 159-182.

with the simultaneous repatriation of African Americans to Liberia, it was clear that non-Europeans were not welcome in White America.[36]

However important it is to emphasize race, one cannot ignore the reality of classism and a loss of political ascendancy. While early America was unquestionably a racially prejudiced society, it was also a classist society. Indeed, many of the Founding Fathers supported a conservative definition of enfranchisement that solidified the political power of property owners. The established socioeconomic class, having secured and extended their political power were not interested in diluting their ascendancy with poor White men, let alone women, Jews, Catholics, Native Americans, or African Americans. While Black opponents of colonization like Forten and Douglass tried to elevate American politics to include African Americans, colonists like Sheridan and Russwurn were, in many ways, preserving their wealth and escaping second-class freedom.

Conclusion

And yet, as Sheridan once said, "I would die tomorrow to be free today." Regardless of his financial success and property ownership, Sheridan recognized the formidable uphill battle to obtain full-class citizenship in the United States. American laws, as classist as they may have been, were even more racist. The movement towards Jacksonian "democracy" in the 1820s and 1830s for the "common man" led to an expansion of the franchise and political opportunities to working class White men, while at the same time limiting opportunities for Black men. Indeed, many middle- and upper-

[36] Aryn Baker, "Why the U.S. Has a Special Responsibility to Help Liberia with Ebola," *Time Magazine*. September 17, 2014.

class Black men who could vote prior to the 1820s saw themselves disenfranchised by the 1830s, regardless of their financial security and property ownership.

As one of the nation's most successful Black men, John Russwurm was desperate to escape the "suffocatingly racist environment of the United States - a reading of the American social and political landscape that told him that the North, as well as the South, was incapable of supporting the growth of a strong and dignified Black populace enjoying the benefits of full citizenship."[37] Joseph Jenkins Roberts and the younger immigrants who left for Liberia in the company of older family members certainly made the most of their new opportunities in Liberia.[38]

However, in Liberia, the Americo-Liberian elite too often created what historian James Ciment calls "Another America" based upon the plantation system and the exploitation of indigenous Liberians and even darker-skinned Americo-Liberians.[39] Ironically, the often light-skinned African Americans immigrants to West Africa were often perceived as White by the native people of the region but Black by European Americans.[40] The colonial era was marred by constant warfare between the Americo-Liberian elite and indigenous people from the nation's interior, especially from Kru and Grebo ethnic groups. Perhaps most tellingly, the region's indigenous people were denied citizenship status,

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[37] Winston, 48.
[38] Brandon Mills, "The United States of Africa," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 34:1 (2014), 79–107.
[39] Ciment, 1.
[40] Robert Murray, *Atlantic Passages: Race, Mobility, and Liberian Colonization* (Jacksonville: University Press of Florida 2021).

which included the right to vote, until 1904.[41] The Americo-Liberians dominated the political and economic systems of Liberia for more than a hundred years. From 1848 to 1980, almost all of Liberia's twenty presidents were from the Americo-Liberian class of men who were both mixed-race and financially successful (including two members of the Barclay family of Kentucky).[42] The only exception was Edward James Roye. While Roye was a wealthy African American, he was full-blooded Igbo and not mixed-race. Some historians have speculated that it was Roye's lack of mixed-race status that caused him to be overthrown by the nation's elite as President of Liberia on October 26, 1871, prior to his mysterious death the following year.[43] The South Carolina-born and mixed-race Vice President of Liberia, James S. Smith, completed Roye's term. Even well into the twentieth century Black Nationalists like Marcus and Amy Jacques Garvey "maintained a utopian vision of Liberia as a haven for black men and women throughout the diaspora," while simultaneously viewing the nation's marginalized indigenous population as "uncivilized" who needed African American missionaries, intellectuals, and businessmen to bring them Christianity, commerce, and civilization.[44]

The final indigenous Liberian revolt against the elite descendants of African Americans occurred on April 12, 1980. Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, a member of the

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[41] Harold D. Nelson, *Liberia: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: United States Government, 1984).
[42] Elwood D. Dunn, Amos J. Beyan, Carl Patrick Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 80.
[43] Everett Jenkins Jr., *Pan-African Chronology II: A Comprehensive Reference to the Black Quest for Freedom in Africa, the Americas, Europe and Asia, 1865-1915* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2015), 84-86, 436.
[44] Blain, 106.

Krahn ethnic group, led sixteen indigenous non-commissioned officers into the presidential palace, killing President William Richard Tolbert Jr. and twenty-seven others. One of the few members of the Tobert Cabinet not executed was Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was, not coincidentally, one of the only indigenous members within the administration. Sirleaf would spend the rest of her life seeking reconciliation and peace for a nation long afflicted with tension between its indigenous citizens and the descendants of African American immigrants. She would eventually not only be awarded a Nobel Peace prize for her efforts, but would become Africa's first elected female head of state.[45]

Discussion Questions

1. What did Louis Sheridan, a free and wealthy Southern African American, mean when he said in 1836, "I would die tomorrow to be free today"?
2. Discuss the various motivations behind African American immigration to West Africa.
3. How was the American Colonization Society "antiblack"? What motivations did both Northern abolitionists and Southern slaveholders share in supporting the organization?

Writing Prompt

[45] Benjamin G. Dennis and Anita K. Dennis, *Slaves to Racism: An Unbroken Chain from America to Liberia* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2008).

1) For further research, consider scholars Benjamin G. Dennis and Anita K. Dennis's argument that the Libero-Americans replicated the patriarchy and racist society of the American South when creating the Republic of Liberia. Identify the merits of this argument, and well as the ways that ways nineteenth century Antebellum American and Liberia were different.

Chapter 7

The Education of African Americans

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INTRODUCTION

The education of African Americans includes both formal and informal attempts by Blacks to gain literacy and develop skills that would allow them to survive in a racialized society. In the nineteenth century, literacy was perceived as a means of emancipation from a life of servitude and a path to eventual citizenship. When slaves were emancipated in 1863, churches, benevolent societies, and philanthropies addressed the need for educational services. During the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), Black leaders and White elites debated the issue of "Black education." The outcome was industrial education and second-class citizenship. The existence of the slave economy, an agrarian society, and a dispersed rural geography circumvented the development of a systematic approach to education by Southern states for both Whites and Blacks. With the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, political and legal action overturned the segregation codified in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Currently, school integration has been eroded due to White flight, the abandonment of busing, and residential segregation.

THE CONTEXT FOR BLACK EDUCATION PRIOR TO THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD

The Africans who were brought to North America as a result of the slave trade represented a variety of languages and cultures. Nevertheless, Africans were able to preserve and transmit their cultural customs and traditions to the New World. According to historian Ira Berlin, "Slowly, almost imperceptibly, transplanted Africans became a new

people. They spoke English, worked with English tools, and ate food prepared in the English manner. On the eve of the [American] Revolution, many Blacks had done so for two or three generations, and sometimes more Free Blacks, particularly in larger cities, formed their own schools and supplied teachers. John Chavis (1763-1838), a respected free Black teacher and Presbyterian minister, operated a private school from 1808 to 1830 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Originally a multiracial school, Whites eventually protested the presence of Blacks. When they did, Chavis taught White students during the day and free Blacks in the evenings. Abolitionists who opposed the "peculiar institution" of slavery in Northern and Southern states as well as some religious groups educated slaves and free Blacks as well as Native Americans. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) was preeminent in this endeavor. In the Middle West, schools such as the Union Literary Institute in Indiana were supported by Quakers. Founded in 1846 by a multiracial board of Quakers and free Blacks living on the Indiana/Ohio border settlement of Longtown, the Institute was a manual labor boarding school that required students to work the surrounding farmland for four hours per day. While there were other instances of integrated schools, they did not last as racial attitudes hardened in both Northern and Southern states.

A few schools existed for the purpose of advanced elementary and secondary training such as the Institute for Colored Youth, a school started in the early 1830s by a group of Philadelphia Quakers. A college education was also available to a limited number of students at schools like Oberlin College in Ohio and Berea College in Kentucky. Berea was the first college in the South to be co-educational as well as racially integrated. Founded by the abolitionist John Gregg Fee (1816-1901) in 1855, it offered preparatory classes leading to advanced study. In 1904, a Kentucky state law forced it to segregate and accept Whites only. Afterward, Berea administrators assisted in the establishment of the Lincoln Institute near Louisville to educate Blacks until the state law was finally amended in 1950.

Any nascent support for formal education for slaves ceased after the Nat Turner Rebellion took place in Southampton County, Virginia, in August 1831. A mystic, Turner (1800-1831) had learned to read and write and conducted religious services on the

plantation. The Rebellion was the largest and deadliest slave uprising in United States history. Before the Virginia militia quashed it, the slaves killed approximately sixty White men, women and children. The rebellion created hysteria and the retaliation by the Southern states was swift. Black codes or laws were instituted across the Southern states that forbade slaves to learn to read, to assemble, to bring suit against White persons, or to travel without permission. Little distinction was made between free and enslaved Blacks. Even Sunday schools began to limit access to African Americans, who then clandestinely operated their own schools.

Southern plantations were feudalistic, self-contained worlds that manufactured their own food, clothing, tools, and buildings. As a result, on-the-job training programs developed that allowed slaves to acquire some necessary skills. When they were trained to meet certain needs on the plantation, slaves served a kind of apprenticeship. In some cases, masters paid to have promising and trusted slaves apprenticed to master craftsmen. This arrangement benefitted the plantation owners who often hired out slaves to other plantations for profit and were able to reap a higher price when skilled craftsmen went on the auction block. The Colonial Era model of apprenticeship also required that masters teach their students to read and write. While some masters did so, others ignored it and were not penalized. Despite the fact that the practice of hiring out was discouraged by Southern states, it allowed plantations to become, as Booker T. Washington observed, "industrial schools."[1] Enslaved men became carpenters, blacksmiths, machinists, cooks, and farmers. Women were farmers and cooks, seamstresses, weavers, and midwives. This system contributed to the development of skilled workers within both the free Black and slave populations.

The example of Dave the Slave is a case in point. David Drake (c.1801-c.1870s), also known as Dave the Slave or Dave the Potter, may have been born in the United States. His first owner was Harvey Drake, who, with Dr. Abner Landrum, owned a large pottery business in Edgefield, South Carolina. Although it is unclear how he learned to read and write, scholars speculate that Dave worked for Landrum's Edgefield, South

[1] Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Doubleday, 1901), 175.

Carolina, newspaper *The Hive.* After Harvey Drake died, Dave's ownership was transferred to Landrum's son and subsequently, to his grandson Franklin Landrum. In 1849, Lewis Miles acquired ownership and Dave produced his largest amount of wares. Twenty of his jars and jugs are inscribed with original poetry, including couplets such as "I wonder where is all my relations/Friendship to all—and every nation."[2] Fifty extant pieces display his signature maker's mark, date, and other inscriptions.

While the plantation economy was intended to deny access to educational experiences, what historian Henry Allen Bullock refers to as a "hidden passage" operated within the slave community prior to the start of the Civil War.[3] Educational opportunities expanded for African slaves by the opening of the nineteenth century. Slaves who worked in the "Big House," as opposed to field hands, were exposed to conversations and written materials. Before coming of age, there was a tendency for slave and White children to interact together. "Play schools" became an avenue through which slaves could be taught to read by their White companions (Bullock, p. 10). The children of more benevolent slave owners sometimes defied the law and held informal learning sessions. Black leaders Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) and Booker T. Washington described in their autobiographies how they were able to become literate.

Several factors motivated the African American quest for literacy: 1) since reading was explicitly forbidden, literacy was an act of defiance; 2) literacy served as a means of doing one's assigned tasks; and 3) it was a means of socializing into the larger society. For Whites, religion also played a role in literacy. As a method of maintaining control over and enforcing obedience, planters would hold religious services on the plantation that often required Bible reading. It was thought to be a deterrent to insurrections and escapes as well as a means of civilizing Blacks by imposing Christianity.

It is important to note that, unlike New England and the Midwest, the South did not have a system of common schools, even for Whites. Common schools were tax-

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[2] Leonard Todd, *Carolina Clay: The Life and Legend of the Salve Potter Dave* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 101.

[3] Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 1-21.

supported institutions that taught a common (or rudimentary) curriculum in a common setting such as a one-room school. Along with Webster's Blue-backed *Speller*, pupils practiced reading via the McGuffey *Eclectic Readers*, which contained moral lessons and taught teachers how to pronounce words correctly in order to standardize the language. During the antebellum period, the diversity of language due to migration and immigration made it difficult to communicate. Although school reformer Horace Mann envisioned that the common school would ameliorate the divisions between the rich and poor, it did not—nor did it welcome Blacks, Native Americans, or Catholics.

THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU, PHILANTHROPY, AND BENEVOLENCE

With the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Whites feared a mass of uneducated, newly freed Blacks in the South as well as those who had moved to the North, seeking the protection of the Union Army. The enormity of the situation was expressed by General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820-1891) in February 1862: "To relieve the government of a burden that may hereafter become unsupportable, and to enable the Blacks to support and govern themselves in the absence of their disloyal guardians, a suitable system of cultivation and instruction must be combined with one providing for physical wants."[4] Answering the call were benevolent societies in large Northern cities who sent clothing, food, and money, but also teachers for the refugees, who were referred to as contraband of war. Church organizations joined in, most notably the American Missionary Association which had been formed in 1849 for the propagation of the gospel at home and abroad. The Baptist Church, North Home Missionary Society, Freedmen's Aid Society, and General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church also funneled money and supplies through the Union Army. Mary S. Peake (1823-1862) a mixed-race, well-educated member of the Hampton, Virginia, Black elite opened one of the first schools for freedmen in 1861 at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. In 1862, 53

[4] Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands* (Boston: Lea and Shepherd Publishers, 1893), 16-17.

missionaries mainly from New York and Boston landed at Beaufort, South Carolina, and started the first extensive schools for former slaves on the Sea Islands.

Since the benevolent societies were located in the North and their stated mission was education for salvation, they set about devising a school system based on the New England common school. As the relief effort taxed the army, the U.S. Congress passed an act in 1865 creating the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, which was known as the Freedmen's Bureau. Operating out of the War Department, the Bureau was a custodial agency charged with securing the "health, sustenance, and legal rights for refugees" and provide them with "the foundations of education. "The act served to legitimize the teachers of the benevolent societies and to protect them. However, many in the army did not feel it was their job, as is expressed in a letter by a teacher in The *Freedmen's Bulletin* in 1865: "Arrived—went about gathering scholars; have forty. Did well enough till it rained; since then have walked three miles a day, ankle-deep in thick, Black mud, that pulls off my shoes. Nothing to eat but strong pork and sour bread. Insulted for a 'nigger teacher.' Can't buy anything on credit, and haven't a cent of money. The school shed has no floor, and the rains sweep clean across it, through the places where the windows should be. I have to huddle the children first in one corner and then in another, to keep them from drowning or swamping. The Provost Marshal won't help me. Says 'he don't believe in nigger teachers—didn't 'list to help them.' The children come, rain or shine, plunging through the mud—some of them as far as I do. Pretty pictures they are. What shall I do? If it will ever stop raining, I can get along."[5]

Referred to derisively as Yankee Schoolmarms, this challenge provided adventurous women an occupational opportunity. The Schoolmarms were Black as well as White and generally stayed in the South only a year or two. Middle-class Black teachers such as Charlotte Forten (1837-1914), an anti-slavery Philadelphia teacher, who were newly exposed to the poverty and racism of the South, found it difficult to stay. White women saw it as their missionary duty and were criticized for importing New England Puritan values into the South such as punctuality, cleanliness, good manners, and standard

[5] *Freedmen's Bulletin*, Chicago, Vol. 1, No. 6, May 6, 1865.

speech. It should be noted that the Freedmen's Bureau shouldered much of the burden by contributing $672,989 in taxes and tuition and donating approximately $500,000 through their own church organizations. This generosity was despite the fact that they were now sharecropping, starting businesses, and establishing other institutions such as churches and aid societies that would lead to the formation of a Black middle class. This pattern of matching funds would set in place a pattern capitalized on by philanthropists during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

By 1869, more than 9,500 teachers were working in the Freedmen's schools. By 1870, when their educational work ended, the Freedmen's Bureau had established 4,329 schools with an enrollment of 247,000 students. Those in Louisiana, Virginia, and North Carolina made the most progress toward an organized system of education. Historian James D. Anderson points out that efforts by Blacks to self-educate are harder to track and, as a result, underappreciated in the historical record. Whites were often not happy with the educational progress afforded to Blacks. Makeshift schools that met in outbuildings and abandoned shacks were burned and teachers were threatened. But some White children began to attend Freedmen's schools, which became briefly multiracial.

MAKING THE CASE FOR BLACK HIGHER EDUCATION

There was also a recognized need for professional education by which Black doctors, lawyers, and teachers could be trained. The Freedmen's Bureau cooperated with philanthropic and religious organizations to develop a number of institutions of higher education. Although the curriculum initially consisted of elementary and secondary (high school) work, the colleges would eventually grow into their name. In 1866, the American Missionary Association established Fisk University (originally the Fisk Free Colored School) in Nashville, Tennessee, and Talladega College (originally named for Freedmen's Bureau General Wager Swayne) in 1867 in Talladega, Alabama. Fisk classes were initially held in the barracks of the Union Army. In the 1870s, a nine-member coeducational singing

group of students later named the Jubilee Singers was formed that performed traditional spirituals and slave songs. The proceeds from the sale of shackles and chains from a slave pit on the Fisk property were used to fund their travel and touring expenses. Other religious denominations and aid societies began to turn their attention to higher education as well.

This was not the case for Howard University, however. Sponsored by the First Congregational Society of Washington, D.C., it was originally founded as a seminary for the education of African American clergymen. It was named for General Oliver Otis Howard (1830-1909), a Civil War hero, who was the Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau and later president of the University, 1869-1874. Chartered in 1867, Howard was funded by philanthropy and tuition as well as an annual congressional appropriation from the U.S. Department of Education. This arrangement would lead some historians of higher education to refer to Howard as the national African American university. Unlike other colleges, Howard was devoted to graduate and professional education from its very beginning, including medical training, law, sociology, and history focused on the Black experience.

By 1890, more than 200 colleges dedicated to serving Black students had been founded by a combination of funds from missionary groups, Black churches and benevolent groups, and the Freedman's Bureau. These universities would form the infrastructure of Black higher education, and were later joined by land-grant institutions sponsored by the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. The first Morrill Act focused on branches of learning as related to agricultural and the mechanical arts. The Second Morrill Act of 1890 required separate land-grant institutions for persons of color. Among the seventy colleges and universities which evolved from the Morrill Acts are several of today's historically Black colleges and universities, such as Mississippi's Alcorn State (established in 1871), Georgia's Fort Valley State (established 1895), and Kentucky's State Normal School for Colored Persons (established 1886), which would later extend beyond its function as a "Normal" school that focused on training teachers and be renamed Kentucky State University.

The founding of these numerous colleges precipitated a fierce debate between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois over the nature of the educational curriculum for Black students. Booker Taliaferro Washington (1856-1915) was born into slavery in Virginia to an African American slave and a White plantation owner. After emancipation, his mother moved the family to West Virginia to join her husband. Washington began to learn to read and attended school for the first time. He worked in salt furnaces and coal mines in West Virginia and then made his way to Hampton Institute. Hampton Institute president General Samuel C. Armstrong served as a mentor and recommended that Washington become the first leader of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, which opened in 1881.

By 1890, Armstrong had articulated his theory of Black education and was convinced that the moral uplift of Blacks could be achieved through labor. He presented industrial education as the character-building force capable of elevating Blacks to a level of acceptance by the South and the nation. He identified hard work as a Christian virtue and a civilizing force. According to Armstrong, Blacks disliked labor because they had been forced to work all their lives. But an industrial system would make Blacks not only self-supporting, but also provide the South with a labor force. His ideology took hold in Washington. When he became principal of Tuskegee, it was modeled on Hampton. Responding to the context in which Blacks lived, Tuskegee's mission was originally to supply well-trained teachers for various schools but it was also intended that teachers be able and eager to teach vocational skills such as gardening and carpentry. Students had to apply practical skills even to their more academic courses. Washington emphasized literacy for freedmen and basic education and training in manual and domestic labor trades. This, ideology, however, also led to a discriminatory base for Black education—one that ostensibly required less money, under-qualified teachers, and fewer resources. Washington's far-reaching influence on conservative social and educational issues for Blacks made him popular among not only Black leaders but also White philanthropists. Some Blacks, however, criticized his control over the Black masses as the Tuskegee Machine. Nevertheless, he became the foremost Black leader in the post-Reconstruction era. His autobiography, *Up from Slavery,* recounted his struggle to escape poverty and

gain an education. Emphasizing the Hampton model, the term Hampton-Tuskegee soon came to stand for industrial education as the preferred educational curriculum for Blacks. William Henry Baldwin, Jr, (1827-1894) the president of Long Island Railroad, convinced other major White philanthropists to support Tuskegee, particularly the president of Sears, Roebuck and Company Julius Rosenwald.

Perhaps no statement was more derided than Washington's address to the attendees of the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895, when Washington, flanked by wealthy White benefactors, stated to the crowd: "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things of mutual progress."[6] Uttered during a period of increased incidences of lynching, Washington's comments preceded by a year the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v Ferguson* that upheld racial segregation and codified the doctrine of "separate but equal." By eschewing civil and political rights, Washington was accused of accommodating to White interests by DuBois, newspaper editor Monroe Trotter, and other members of the Black intelligentsia.

William Edward Burghardt DuBois (1868-1963) was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, to mixed-race parents who were part of a small free Black community. After attending local integrated public schools, neighbors and the First Congregational Church of Great Barrington sponsored his collegiate education. He matriculated at Fisk University and later received a second bachelor's degree in history from Harvard since White schools would not accept credits from a Black college. After studying at the University of Berlin on a fellowship from the John F. Slater Fund for the Education of Freedmen, he returned to Harvard and was the first African American to earn a doctorate from that institution in 1895. He performed sociological field research in Philadelphia's Black neighborhoods and published *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1899, the first case study of a Black community in the United States. In that study, he described the Black underclass as "the submerged tenth" and would later use the term the "Talented Tenth"

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[6] Booker T. Washington, Address delivered at the Opening of the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition, September 18, 1895.

to indicate a Black elite class who should be educated in the classics, humanities, and social and physical sciences. He came to believe that racial integration was the key to democratic equality in American cities.

DuBois's educational views began to crystalize when he opposed Washington's apparent accommodation to White interests as expressed in the Atlanta Compromise. He felt that Black schools should focus more on liberal arts and an academic curriculum as a means of developing a leadership cadre. His publication in 1903 of *The Souls of Black Folk* took direct aim at Washington's silence on civil and political rights. Although both men emphasized education, the debate over the curriculum would continue, and Black colleges and universities were caught in the middle. As a result, many chose to skillfully incorporate both a classical-liberal curriculum and a vocational curriculum, in order to attract money from White philanthropists. But these Black leaders were not the only ones who began to devise a plan for Black education.

DECISIONS AT CAPON SPRINGS

On June 29, 1898, a group of White ministers, college presidents, and philanthropists met in Capon Springs, West Virginia, to formulate their own philosophy in regards to training Black teachers and leaders. This gathering was the start of a series known as the Capon Springs Conference for Education in the South. By the end of the Third Conference at Capon Springs, it was agreed by all members that the best way to provide training for Blacks was to first provide adequate schools and education for the neglected Southern Whites. The schools would be separate but operate under one set of laws and supported by taxes paid by the pupil. It was decided that certain Black colleges would be strengthened for the purpose of training ministers, physicians, and lawyers. In this instance, there was at least an inkling of recognition for the need for a differentiated curriculum rather than one that treated the race as a homogeneous mass. It also marked the beginning of the formulation of the concept of "negro education"—ideals that

encompassed the morality and self-help lessons of the common school and reserved industrial education for Blacks.

At the opening of the Fourth Conference in 1901, the Southern Education Board (SEB) was established to sway public opinion on behalf of public schools and solicit gifts from private persons, boards, and philanthropic foundations to promote public education. Specifically, the General Education Board (GEB) made up of the trustees of the SEB, handled gifts and grants. In 1909 Standard Oil owner John D. Rockefeller and his son established the Rockefeller Foundation, in part to deflect criticism of the Standard Oil company's ruthless business dealings. By 1914, it had invested in schools for Blacks and begun a broad-based philanthropic agenda that involved farming in the Southern states, public high schools in the South, and a campaign to eradicate hookworm. As a result, the Conference for Education in the South became the most influential educational force in the history of the region, spanning the entire policy-making realm of Southern education. Philanthropists funneled money through it, public school officials sought its advice, and state legislatures paid attention. The goal was to make Southern people more willing to accept self-imposed taxation for the purpose of financing education for their children.

Although they were not at the table, Blacks reaped some benefits. Some of the states equalized school terms and normal schools for Blacks were established with newly acquired public funds. But as time passed, industrial education became almost solely a Black school curriculum. The SEB transferred its functions to the GEB in 1914. The result was that Black hopes for equality of educational opportunity had been sacrificed because of the decisions. The South accepted its responsibility for Black education but the division had been made. The federal government was excluded from Black education and the door was opened wider to the whims and prerogatives of White philanthropy.

The economic revolution of the late nineteenth century created a class of wealthy industrialists. Many of these individuals were self-made men who believed in individualism and monopolistic business practices. To some extent, their investment in the South was motivated by self-interest. The South offered a ready labor market and a means to offset the criticism. In 1867, financier George Peabody (1795-1869) established the Peabody Educational Fund for the promotion of education in the American South. The fund

supported public schools as well as normal schools, and beginning a pattern that would persist, it required local communities to provide matching funds at a ratio of up to three or four dollars for every one dollar in Peabody support. Clearly directed at industrial education, the Peabody Fund focused its attention on assisting the South, but not particularly Blacks. It was going to assist in the establishment of a permanent system of public education by granting scholarships to students who were studying to be teachers and in the promotion of industrial education. The trustees of the fund directed their efforts toward providing separate schools for the races.

In 1914, the Peabody Fund merged with the Slater Fund (1882-1937). A Connecticut textile manufacturer, John F. Slater (1815-1884), had created a fund in 1882 for industrial education among the freedmen of the South, focusing on teacher training and industrial education for Blacks. By 1911, the Fund began to encourage the development of a system of county training schools to provide courses in teacher training and basic industries. The Slater Fund supported colleges in order to develop teachers for the complement of county training schools, which it was seeking to build. It provided substantial support for the Black colleges that denominational groups had established and funded Hampton and Tuskegee disproportionally. It supported Black colleges to establish and maintain industrial departments, even if those colleges had originally developed as liberal arts institutions. The county-training school would become a permanent part of the South's public school system.

Dr. Hollis Frissell, the White president of Hampton, and Booker T. Washington approached Miss Anna T. Jeanes, a Philadelphia Quaker, for assistance in the development of a rural school program that had been started by their respective institutions. The Jeanes Rural School Fund would develop an extension service that combined practical lessons with traditional subjects. Black teacher Virginia E. Randolph, who worked with a Black school in Henrico County, Virginia, administered the Jeanes model. She visited other teachers and encouraged them to improve their schoolhouses and start industrial training. The first Jeanes teacher was Virginia Estelle Randolph (1874-1958), appointed in 1908 to work in Henrico County, Virginia. She was to be a helper rather than a supervisor and responsible to the local school superintendent and his school

board. Other funds soon began to contribute to the Jeanes Fund and it spread to other states. Although the school was the core of the program, it was also concerned with public relations in that it sought to cultivate community interest in school welfare. This involved changes in the curriculum and a more applied approach to issues encountered in the everyday environment of African Americans. The Jeanes teachers participated in churches, clubs, and community improvement leagues. Jeanes teachers taught the children to grow or produce many of the products that their parents bought from stores. The school garden and its products were utilized to teach methods of canning and preserving vegetables.

The Julius Rosenwald Fund (1917-1948) perhaps had the biggest impact on Black education. Julius Rosenwald used money derived from his presidency of Sears, Roebuck and Company. He also funded the construction of sixteen Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) buildings and one Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) for Blacks and supported a large Black housing project in Chicago known as the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments in 1929. Rosenwald became a trustee of Tuskegee Institute and established the Rural School Building Program in 1917. Rosenwald established a nonprofit enterprise that directed its interests toward building rural schools, later toward the support of high schools and colleges, and finally toward the provision of fellowships to enable Blacks and Whites of unusual promise to advance their careers.

Its most well-known program was the Rural School-Building Program started at Tuskegee. In a matching fund system, Blacks had to supply money and labor to support the schools, which were known as Rosenwald schools. Blacks purchased the land and some White citizens contributed a little money. The program lasted from 1917 to 1932 and built 5,357 public schools, shops, and teachers' homes in 883 counties of fifteen Southern states. In accordance with Progressive Era philosophy, the architectural plans were standardized. The Rosenwald Schools became a part of the public school system. In 1925, the Fund began work in the field of library services. It assembled and distributed small sets of books to rural schools, attempted to improve the library facilities of Black colleges, and cooperated in the establishment of country library systems. This program was extended to the development of libraries in Black colleges. However, some of the

material goods received by Black colleges from Sears, Roebuck and Company were often "seconds" or imperfect products. In addition, no Blacks were employed at the Sears headquarters in Chicago.

The Rosenwald Fellowship program gave matching grants to both White and Blacks to pursue advanced training at Northern institutions. For Blacks, it would lead to the development of a leadership cadre of teachers at Black institutions who could professionalize by earning an advanced degree and return to Black institutions better trained. This, in turn, would lead to institution building on the part of Black colleges. The selection was made through applications and interviews. At first, the Fund focused on teachers but over time, the Fund awarded fellowships to writers, painters, dancers, and musical composers. After a while, there were not enough positions in Black higher education to provide jobs because White colleges resisted hiring them. As a result, some high schools benefited. For example, Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, had on its faculty teachers who had received such fellowships and contributed to the reputation that it was the jewel in the crown of Black schools in Indiana. As the Fund became more attuned to the problems of segregation, it shifted its attention to the field of race relations until the Fund closed in 1948. It was Rosenwald's express desire that the Fund should expend its capital and not seek to exist in perpetuity.

THE NAACP AND THE SUPREME COURT

The formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1910 included as one of its objectives the commencement of a scientific study of Black schools and the formation of a national committee for the purpose of studying the question of national aid for education. Led by Charles H. Houston, the vice dean of Howard University's School of Law, a cadre of lawyers filed suits against graduate and professional schools who did not admit Blacks. In this regard, the 1896 *Plessy* ruling of Separate but Equal was vulnerable. Some elite private schools had been willing to accept

Blacks that were studying law or theology but virtually no public graduate or professional schools admitted Blacks in the South. Focusing on small numbers of mature graduate students was expected to quell White fears.

Beginning in 1935, the NAACP filed suits against institutions in border states to accommodate Black students. In response, Southern states instituted out-of-state tuition scholarship programs whereby the states would reimburse Black graduate students for tuition or bus fare to travel to Northern institutions. But this meant that Blacks had to leave their families behind and the reimbursement was often not commensurate with the costs incurred by graduate study. The practice, however, lasted well into the 1960s in some states despite that fact that in 1938, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v Canada* that the scholarships did not eliminate the discrimination. The Southern states largely ignored the ruling.

Although the NAACP lost cases in Kansas and Tennessee, it secured an important win in a case involving Ada Lois Sipuel's denied application for admission to the University of Oklahoma's law school. In 1947, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Sipuel v Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma* that the state was compelled to establish a law school for Blacks within a state institution by. After delays, Sipuel was eventually admitted to the University of Oklahoma law school in 1949.

The next case was that of Heman Marion Sweatt, who had applied for admission to the University of Texas law school, since it was the only one in the state of Texas. In *Sweatt v Painter* the District Court of Travis County ruled that Sweatt had been denied equal protection of the laws as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. The ruling stipulated that the state of Texas had to establish a separate but equal law school for him. A three-room law school was set up at Houston, Texas, under the supervision of historically Black Prairie View A&M College, which was clearly not equal to the White school. In 1950, the Supreme Court found in favor of Sweatt and ordered that he be admitted to the University of Texas law school. Although more suits were filed, and some states remained resistant, considerable progress in the integration of graduate education had been accomplished by 1950.

Encouraged by this progress, the NAACP turned its attention to elementary and secondary schools. Although Black parents had filed lawsuits challenging the unequal conditions of Black schools compared with White ones, each suit had to be fought at the local level. The NAACP, led by attorney Thurgood Marshall, decided to challenge the practice of separate but equal as unconstitutional, thereby overruling *Plessy v Ferguson*. Several cases were consolidated. A unique strategy was employed when psychologists Kenneth B. Clark and Mamie Clark conducted experiments with dolls. Children were asked questions about Black and White dolls such as "who is smarter," "who is prettier," and so forth. When even the Black children chose the White doll, it reified the argument that segregation was the root cause of low self-esteem and, therefore, inherently discriminatory. A unified U.S. Supreme Court issued the landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, ruling that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."[7]

Contrary to common belief, the issue was not bilaterally supported. Not all Blacks wanted integration, but they did want equality. Black community schools were places of nurturing and comfort, despite not having the newest books and furniture. Teachers and principals were often leaders in their communities and parents were involved in their children's education. The decision in *Brown* would set a precedent for other court cases in regards to inclusion. But White resistance continued. In 1958, in Little Rock, Arkansas, nine Black children chosen for their excellent grades attempted to integrate Little Rock's Central High School. U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a gradualist, tried to take a moderate stand. As tensions flared, he finally sent in federal troops and activated the Arkansas National Guard. The children were admitted and all but one finished the year at Central High. But afterward, White governors closed public schools throughout the South to avoid integration. But if the Supreme Court had envisioned an end to segregation, integration would be another matter.

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[7] *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483, May 17, 1954, 495.

Questioning the actions of Southern states to integrate the schools, the case of *Swann et al. v Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education et al.* was filed by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund on behalf of six-year-old James Swann and nine other families. In 1965, Judge J. Braxton Craven ruled in favor of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) but the case was filed again. The issue was whether or not school busing—a term that described a desegregation effort that bused school children from their neighborhood schools into different schools in the city—was an appropriate remedy for the problem of racial imbalance in schools. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and led to the widespread use of busing to end segregation. But the courts also mandated that, once the schools were determined to be desegregated, busing would end. The use of busing during the 1970s and 1980s made Charlotte known nationally as "the city that made desegregation work." But in the 1990s, CMS introduced a choice plan around the concept of magnet schools. White families complained, however, and the federal order of busing ended in Charlotte Mecklenburg. CMS then crafted a "School Choice Plan" that divided the city into four large attendance zones based on neighborhoods. A similar dismantling of the use of busing to racially equalize school populations has occurred throughout the South and Midwest.

CONCLUSION

The slaves freed by the Emancipation Proclamation looked at education as a means of realizing freedom and social inclusion. Their children, however, were tracked into a system of industrial education and a path to second-class citizenship crafted by Northern industrial philanthropists, some Black educators, and most Southern school officials. The decisions made at Capon Springs gave Whites control over the direction, structure, and content of Black elementary, secondary, normal, and college education until the 1940s. With the formation of the NAACP, however, Blacks strategically used the legal system to dismantle school segregation, and in its wake, segregation in all facets of society.

Discussion Questions

1. African Americans were conflicted about integrated schools. What are the benefits and what are the disadvantages of school integration?
2. The debate for "negro education" centered around the curriculum. What are the benefits of a liberal-classical curriculum versus a vocational-technical (industrial) curriculum?
3. Booker T. Washington remains a controversial figure. By advocating for industrial training for the Black masses, was he an accommodationist to White interests or a realist?
4. In 2010, Mark Zuckerberg, of Facebook, donated $100 million to the failing Newark, New Jersey, school system. It didn't go well. Was he following in the paths of the educational philanthropists of the Progressive Era?
5. Was it a wise decision for the NAACP lawyers to use psychological methods to argue that racial segregation was inherently harmful?

Writing Prompt

Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education is considered a precedent for other cases in which students have been prevented from participating fully in the public school system. Can you identify at least two of them and explain why *Brown* acted as a precedent? View episode 3 of *Only a Teacher.* CMS schoolteachers lament the end of busing as a solution to equity in public schools. What are the pros and cons of busing as a strategy and why did it work well in Charlotte?

CHAPTER 8

"It is Our Freedom that Makes Us Different"[1]: Freedom and Identity in Post-Civil War Indian Territory and Oklahoma

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INTRODUCTION

Decades after the Civil War, an 89-nine-year-old Lucinda Davis recalled her life as a slave in Indian Territory during the tumultuous 1860s. She had a Creek Indian owner and lived in the Creek Territory, located in the eastern portion of present-day Oklahoma. Her parents, also owned by Creeks, had different masters.[2] At the war's end, and like many formerly enslaved people, Davis reunited with her parents. But unlike the majority of emancipated slaves, freedom for former Creek slaves like the Davis family meant full membership in the Creek Nation. Full membership provided exclusive rights to tribal land and participation in the nation's political culture. For Lucinda Davis, full membership allowed her to marry, own property, build a home, raise children, and freely live within Creek tradition.

However, while the Davis family experienced full Creek citizenship most African Americans like A.G. Belton suffered from racial violence in the Deep South. In 1891, Belton proclaimed that "times are hard and getting harder every year we as a people

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[1] Portions of this essay appear in Leroy Myers "Land of the Fair God: the Development of Black Towns in Oklahoma, 1870-1907" (MA Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 2016). See "Interview with Miss Charles Emily Wilson, Black Seminole, Texas, 1992." Quoted in Kenneth W. Porter [Alcione M. Amos and Thomas P. Senter, eds.] *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), xii.

[2] Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 13, Oklahoma, Adams-Young. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn130/. (Accessed January 30, 2018.)

believe that Affrica [sic] is the place but to get from under bondage are thinking Oklahoma as this is our nearest place of safety."[3] But just because the Davis family lived in a free society did not mean they wanted other freedmen to settle within Creek borders. Despite all the change Davis saw in her eighty-nine years of life, she complained that the new generation of Creeks lacked the "Old Creek way" as she reminisced on her upbringing during an interview in Tulsa—a town located in eastern present-day Oklahoma. Davis' desire to preserve the "Old Creek way" conflicted with emigrating freedmen like Belton and would set the stage for Oklahoma to become a racial battleground throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[4] Even later in 1992 Charles Emily Wilson, a Black member of the Seminole Nation extolled the virtues of Black Indians like Lucinda Davis when she proclaimed "In all our travels we have never lost an awareness of our identity and a pride in our freedom, because it is our freedom that makes us different."[5]

The stories of Lucinda Davis and A.G. Belton reflect varied views of freedom following the Civil War. During the **Reconstruction** Era, a period of social and legal change from 1863 to 1877, two distinct groups of freedmen emerged: one group, **African American freedmen**, consisted of former slaves from states like Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia; the second group, **Native American freedmen**, existed within five American Indian tribes: the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek (Muscogee), and Seminole. The relationships between both groups explain differences in Black identity, Black migration, and racial tensions during the Reconstruction Era. Motives and identity within both groups varied. Freedmen from the states, for example,

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[3] A.G. Belton to William Coppinger, 22 July 1891, American Colonization Society Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Quoted in Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus: Black Nationalist and Back-to-Africa Movements, 1890-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 9.

[4] "Lucinda Davis," *The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma), 107-17, http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/davis1.html.

[5] "Interview with Miss Charles Emily Wilson, Black Seminole, Texas, 1992." Quoted in Kenneth W. Porter [Alcione M. Amos and Thomas P. Senter, eds.] *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), xii.

moved to Indian Territory so they could purchase land, achieve economic stability, and escape racial violence in the Deep South. Native American freedmen, on the other hand, generally saw their African American counterparts as intruders in their homeland that infringed on their freedoms. The animosity of Native American freedmen, however, did not stop the spread of the freedmen's narrative that Indian Territory was a promised land for all African Americans.

Well before the Reconstruction Era, however, African slaves escaped their White owners to live with Indians who did not have conceptions of race prior to sustained European interaction by the eighteenth century.[6] A byproduct of Indian interactions and alliances with European settlers from Spain, England, and France was some Native Nations incorporation of chattel slavery. This system of slavery would soon be adopted by the Five Tribes—the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole. Colonial American era interactions between the Five Tribes and African slaves varied. Some Indian tribes, for example, simultaneously harbored runaway slaves while at the same time aided in their return. [7] Such diversity does not mean African and Native cultures did not share similarities—they certainly did. For example, kinship and tribalism played a prominent role in Native American and African social formation. This, in turn, discouraged conceptions of race, because new members had the ability to join a tribe through adoption. Nonetheless, some scholars argue that the similarities both Indians and Africans shared also encouraged closer interaction during the United States' colonial period. And, as with other peoples, slavery and captivity existed in both African and American Indian cultures. However, these societies did not originally hold captives based on race. Compared to chattel slavery, the point of captivity was not dehumanization. Nevertheless, many Indian nations found the system of chattel slavery appalling. Charles Eastman, a member of the Sioux Indian Nation, recalled his uncle's

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[6] Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: the Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 7.
[7] Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974), 260.

account of White American culture in 1902. Eastman's, uncle proclaimed "They [White Americans] have made some of their people servants—yes slaves! We have never believed in keeping slaves, but it seems that these *Washichu* [the rich] do! It is our belief that they painted their servants Black a long time ago, to tell them from the rest, and now the slaves have children born to them of the same color!"[8] This, in effect, enabled the possibility for some captives to obtain full membership. Furthermore, Europeans simultaneously enslaved Africans and Native Americans.[9] These often involuntary bonds, particularly with the Five Tribes, continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to their forced migration to Indian Territory in the 1830s.[10]

The Five Tribes perceived slavery and emancipation a hot-button issue before the Civil War. Compared to the Chickasaw, Choctaw, (and somewhat) Cherokee Nations, the Creek and Seminoles accepted their former slaves with ease following the Civil War. In other words, these tribal nations accepted their freedmen with little physical and political conflict compared to that of the Cherokee, Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations. Ambiguous relations, during the eighteenth century, between the Creek and Seminole Nations and African slaves may attribute to their immediate acceptance of former slaves following the Civil War. Early accounts of the Creek Nation, for example, claim that the tribe held and harbored slaves simultaneously. Benjamin Hawkins, the Thomas Jefferson appointed "Principal Agent for Indian Affairs"

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[8] Peter Nabokov ed., *Native American Testimony: a Chronicle of Indian White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999 [revised edition]), 22.

[9] For more on African and Native American enslavement see Peter Wood, ""The Changing Population of the Colonial South An Overview by Race and Region, 1685-1790" in A. Gregory, Peter Wood & Thomas Hatley eds., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 71.

[10] Wood, *Black Majority*, 117. Quoted from Claude Lèvi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1966), 5; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 4 & 6.

documented several instances of Creek Indians taking slaves as captives.[11] Hawkins in 1797 noted a case regarding Creek Indians killing a husband and wife and abducting a two year old boy and a twelve year old "negro girl."[12] Although it is uncertain what happened to the Black girl and the unidentified boy, it is likely both remained in the Creek Nation as captives, but tribal adoption by a clan or military participation (like the Black Seminoles) would have relinquished their captive status.

The Black Seminoles best exemplify the importance of adoption to the social organization of Native American tribes. The Seminole Nation fought against settler expansion in three conflicts known as the Seminole Wars throughout the nineteenth century with the help of their Black population known as the Black Seminoles who had an ambiguous status due to their informal enslavement.[13] Seminole slaves were practically tenant farmers who gave a portion of their crop yield to their owner. They lived in their own separate communities in Seminole Territory in present-day Florida.[14]

Black Seminoles carried significant influence on Seminole war and diplomacy between Colonial powers. The value of a Black Seminole increased if they were bilingual, due to their previous condition of servitude in French, Spanish or English colonies. It enabled Seminole leaders to negotiate with colonial officials and settlers with different language backgrounds. During the 1820s and 1830s, Florida's government claimed Black Seminoles manipulated Seminole leaders by protecting Black members accused of escaping from colonies like Georgia to the Seminole Nation. However, the nation and their Black interpreters protected runaway slaves for two reasons: First, their Black population served as a loyal base of tribal membership with the ability to provide protection, labor, and diplomacy; and second, Black Seminole

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[11] Benjamin Hawkins, Thomas Foster, ed., *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), 1.
[12] Hawkins, Foster, ed., *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 174-5.
[13] Sylviane Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles: the Story of the American Maroons* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 2.
[14] George Klos, "Blacks and the Seminole Removal Debate, 1821-1835." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (1989): 58.

interpreters were usually former slaves themselves and fought alongside their Native counterparts resisting Removal.[15] Meanwhile, Black slaves and members of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Creek Nations did not often experience the same kind of freedom as the Black Seminole. However, some Creek slaves like Lucinda Davis experienced a less intense form of chattel slavery. According to Davis, Creek slaves like her parents had the freedom of mobility. Her parents lived in their own place and did not have to stay on their owner's plantation and work like "de White people and de Choctaw and Cherokee people say dey had to."[16] Nonetheless, it is evident that each of the Five Tribes had contested relationships with former slaves and Black members of their tribe.[17] As with any peoples, it is a complicated story with ambiguous answers. These complicated issues between the Five Tribes and slavery and race remained from the eighteenth century and shaped their lives during their forced migration to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma.

The forced migration of the Five Tribes from the Southeast to the Southwest, now known as **Indian Removal,** during the 1830s caused political divisions within each tribe. In the Cherokee Nation, more traditional and often religious tribal members urged for the emancipation of slaves for religious and political reasons. Given the complex and ambiguous relationship between African slaves and Indians, many White Americans throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century disliked the presence of

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[15] Klos, "Blacks and the Seminole Removal Debate," 66.

[16] "Lucinda Davis," *The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma), 107-17, http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/davis1.html.

[17] Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 111; Barbara Krauthammer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 72; Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., and Mary Ann Littlefield, "The Beams Family: Free Blacks in Indian Territory." *Journal of Negro History* 61 (1976): 121-31; Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *The Cherokee Freedmen: from Emancipation to American Citizenship* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), 9.

Blacks among Native American populations in the Deep South.[18] White southern slaveholders argued that the Black presence among Native nations encouraged fugitive slavery as in the case with slaves who fled from their masters to live among the Seminole Indians. The passing of the Indian Intercourse Act of 1834 under President Andrew Jackson led to the creation of Indian Territory. It was an attempt to avoid White intrusion on Native land, while expanding White dominance of fertile soil for the growth of cotton and other resource extraction. Justification for Indian Removal also included the false notion of American Indian extinction—a common belief among United States officials.[19] Nonetheless, Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw slaves remained in their condition of servitude during Removal. They cleared paths and protected their Native masters throughout the ordeal with axes and guns. The journey from the Southeast to Indian Territory—present-day Oklahoma took nine months for the Cherokee Nation. An estimated 8,000 Cherokees—Blacks included—died on the "Trail of Tears" due to bouts of sickness and exposure to harsh weather conditions.[20] The number of slaves removed to Indian Territory varied throughout each tribe but most made it to Indian Territory. Nonetheless, each of the Five Tribes recovered from the horrors of Indian Removal and reestablished their governments throughout the 1830s and 1840s.[21]

The legacy of slavery made it difficult for soon-to-be freedmen following the Civil War. Freedmen in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, for example, fought for civil

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[18] Patrick Minges, "Beneath the Underdog: Race, Religion, and the Trail of Tears" *American Indian Quarterly* 25 (2001): 466.
[19] Harry. L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: the Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006 [revised edition]), 53-4.
[20] Minges, "Beneath the Underdog: Race, Religion, and the Trail of Tears" *American Indian Quarterly* 25 (2001): 467.
[21] Murray R. Wickett, *Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Oklahoma 1865-1907* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 3-4; For more on the removal of the Five Civilized Tribes see, Edward Everett Dale & Gene Aldrich, *History of Oklahoma* (Edmond: Thompson Book & Supply Co., 1969) 79-90; Kaye M. Teall, *Black History in Oklahoma: a Resource Book* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma City Public Schools, 1971), 28-30.

rights well into the late nineteenth century but prior Choctaw and Chickasaw slave laws acted as a precedent for the lack of racial equality within both nations. In 1838, for example, the Choctaw Nation passed a law forbidding slaves to learn reading and writing without consent of a slave's owner. In 1857, the Chickasaw passed laws prohibiting slaves to own guns and knives "over four inches long."[22] By 1866, agreements established between the Five Tribes and the federal government sparked a debate concerning who had the ability to settle in Indian Territory, as Indian Treaties extended tribal membership to former slaves of the Five Tribes left some Indian freedmen like the Chickasaw Freedmen in a state of legal limbo with many remaining with their former masters.[23] Meanwhile, African Americans from the racially violent Deep South looked elsewhere for prosperity, solace, and civil rights.[24]

African Americans migrated to new states and territories throughout the 1870s. Thousands looked for refuge from southern racial violence and economic prosperity in Kansas, Texas, and Indian Territory— attracting thousands of African American settlers. The region's fluid social hierarchy stemmed from complex bonds the Five Tribes had with their own Black population before and following the Civil War.[25] In fact, the Five Tribes' legacy of race and tribal politics complicated the status and identity of their former slaves within their respective Tribal Nation. Most stayed with their tribe and maintained their cultural heritage as "Indian" while also coming to terms with their

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[22] Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *The Chickasaw Freedmen: a People Without a Country* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 13.
[23] Littlefield, Jr., *The Chickasaw Freedmen,* 31-3.
[24] Murray R. Wickett, *Contested Territory*, 3-4; For more on the individuals removals of the Five Civilized Tribes see, Dale and Everett, *History of Oklahoma*, 79-90; Kaye M. Teall, *Black History in Oklahoma*, 19 & 28-30; United States Census Office. *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census*, House of Representatives, 2nd Congress, 2nd Session. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), accessed March 20, 2015. https://archive.org/details/preliminaryrepor00inunit. 10-11.Sigmund Sameth, "Creek Negroes: a Study of Race Relations" (MA Thesis University of Oklahoma, 1940), 22.
[25] For more on African American migration to Arkansas, see Lori Bogle, "On Our Way to the Promised Land: Black Migration from Arkansas to Oklahoma, 1889-1893" *Chronicles of Oklahoma 72* (1994): 160-77. Bogle writes Arkansas' Black population increased by 200 percent between 1870 and 1900.

Black heritage which became a topic of discussion for African American settlers. Meanwhile, African Americans used migration to obtain freedom which at times came at the expense of Black Indians in Indian Territory. The Civil War made both groups of freedmen possible and shaped Indian Territory for years to come and well into Oklahoma statehood in the early twentieth century.

THE CIVIL WAR IN INDIAN TERRITORY, 1861-1865

Indian Territory's geographic proximity between the American South and West and status as an unorganized territory—spaces with territorial legislatures overseen by the federal government—rather than an official American state made it a strategic area of control during the Civil War. The Five Tribes struggled deciding the best way forward as sovereign nations independent of the United States government. For some, tribal independence depended on slavery and commerce. Others sought a traditional way of life. This mode of living embraced tribal language and religion rather than English and Christianity. Meanwhile, slaves of Native tribes, like Lucinda Davis' parents, used the war's cause of tribal instability as an opportunity to escape from their Native masters.

The year of the war, 1861, was full of political upheaval for each of the tribes. The Union withdrew officers and resources from Indian Territory and provided military protection for the Five Tribes. But, with the withdrawal of a centralized Union presence in Indian Territory, the Confederacy took the opportunity to occupy Indian Territory forts and negotiate with each of the Five Tribes to support the Confederate cause.[26] Each of the Five Tribes debated issues concerning aligning with either side, but the Choctaw and Chickasaw eventually joined the Confederate cause. Meanwhile, the Cherokee, Seminole, and Creek Nations remained divided on the issue throughout the Civil War with slaveholders supporting the Confederacy and non-slaveholders supporting the Union. But, without Union control of Indian Territory, the border it

[26] Celia E. Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: from Chattel to Citizens* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 133-34.

shared with Confederate Texas became troublesome.[27] During the war, Confederate Texans swore to rid Indian Territory of Union sympathizers and abolitionists.[28] When that was difficult to overcome, Indian slaveholders from the Five Tribes moved their family and property, including slaves, to Texas—a Confederate stronghold throughout much of the Civil War.

Indian Territory's checkered political dimensions affected its slave population as well. Phoebe Banks, a Creek Freedwoman, experienced the threat of going down to Texas. She reminisced that slaves from different plantations conspired and fled from their masters from Creek Territory "up north" to Cherokee Territory in northeast Indian Territory. Consequently, Creek slaves were afraid that their fate would be in Texas, which likely led to harsher treatment encouraging some slaves to flee toward Union lines in northeastern Indian Territory.[29] Banks' father fled the Creek Nation with a group of fugitive slaves, but Confederate soldiers halted their plans when they shot and killed several in the group and captured the remaining few on a "big creek" in Cherokee Territory.[30] Indian Territory's political divisions distressed Creek slaves like Mary Grayson living in a Confederate section of the Creek Nation. Creek members and slaves in Grayson's section attempted to travel to a Union-friendly part of the territory.[31] Overall, the experience of Five Tribes slaves were similar to that of African American slaves, because both groups of freedmen suffered for different reasons, but by the

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[27] *Annual report to the commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1861* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1861), http://images.library.wisc.edu/History/EFacs/CommRep/AnnRep61/reference/history.annrep61.i0005.pdf, 46; Teall, *Black History in Oklahoma*, 54-5.

[28] *Annual report to the commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1861* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1861), http://images.library.wisc.edu/History/EFacs/CommRep/AnnRep61/reference/history.annrep61.i0005.pdf, 47.

[29] Teall, *Black History in Oklahoma*, 73.

[30] Teall, *Black History in Oklahoma*, 73.

[31] "Mary Grayson," Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 13, Oklahoma, Adams-Young. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn130/. (Accessed February 15, 2018.)

same means. [32] The eventual withdrawal of troops from Indian Territory and the Deep South, during the 1870s, encouraged Confederate sympathizers—both Indian and White—to keep former slaves of Whites and the Five Tribes in their place. This period, known as Reconstruction, tested the identity for both Native and African American freedmen as they utilized both flight and Indian law to exercise their newfound freedom as tribal citizens (for Native American freedmen) and as American citizens (for African American freedmen).

RECONSTRUCTION IN INDIAN TERRITORY & THE 1866 TREATIES, 1866-1870

The Treaties of 1866 restructured Indian Territory socially and politically. These agreements, made to make peace with the Five Tribes following the Civil War, required each tribe to adopt their former slaves as tribal members, providing equal rights and privileges, and land cessions to the federal government.[33] Land cessions from the 1866 treaties made an unorganized area located in the heart of present-day Oklahoma known as the **Unassigned Lands**; it became a destination for Blacks and Whites looking for cheap available land and, for Blacks, a refuge from racial violence during the 1880s.[34]

Early Black migrants to Indian Territory based their right to settle on the "freedmen" clauses contained within four separate treaties the federal government made with the Five Tribes. The vague use of the term "freedmen" in the Treaties of

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[32] William Steele, Allan Ashcraft, ed., "A Civil War Letter of General William Steele, CSA" *Arkansas Historical Quarterly 22* (1963): 280.

[33] Edward Everett Dale and Gene Aldrich, *History of Oklahoma* (Edmond: Thompson Book and Supply CO., 1969), 187-7.

[34] Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs Laws and Treaties Vol. I* (Washington D.C: G.P.O., 1904), 940. Oklahoma State University Electronic Publishing Center. https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/kapplers/id/28108/rec/2; Dale and Aldrich, *History of Oklahoma*, 184.

1866 led to a national debate regarding which group of freedmen had the right to settle in the area. Therefore, the Treaties of 1866 warped Black identity and definitions of "freedmen."[35] The treaties abolished slavery within four of the Five Tribes—the Cherokees abolished slavery earlier in 1863. However, the treaties did not delineate between African American freedmen who were legally American citizens by 1868 and Native American freedmen who were not American citizens, but rather, members of their sovereign Native America nation. The 1866 Treaties uses vague terms to describe freedmen. Such terms include, but are not limited to, "persons of African descent," "free people of color," and "freedmen" are used interchangeably.[36] The conflation of both groups of freedmen would eventually spark interest from African American freedmen throughout the Deep South. But, while the government generally viewed Seminole, Creek, and Cherokee Freedmen relations with ease, they pondered the issue of violence against freedmen within the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations decades following the 1866 Treaties.[37]

The Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations did not immediately give equal rights as tribal citizens to their former slaves. An 1866 government commission proclaimed that Choctaw and Chickasaw freedmen lacked rights, and "If they attempt to walk about the country [Indian Territory] they are shot down like dogs."[38] Along with this fact and the plight of a freedwoman whipped nearly to death, the report concluded military

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[35] Kappler, *Indian Affairs vol. 2* (Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 1903), 911 & 933. https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/kapplers/id/29743/rec/1.

[36] Kappler, *Indian Affairs vol. 2*, 919. https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/kapplers/id/29743/rec/1.

[37] Kappler, *Indian Affairs vol. 2*, 911 & 933, https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/kapplers/id/29743/rec/1; *The Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory: the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations* (Washington: United States Census Printing Office, 1894), 7 accessed February 1, 2016, https://books.google.com/books?id=OYETAAAAYAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

[38] John B. Sanborn to James Harlan, January 8, 1866, Report to the Secretary of Interior on condition of Affairs in Indian Territory, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the state of Arkansas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, National Archives M979 Roll 52.

occupation as the best solution.[39] With little progress on freedmen relations, an 1868 government report concluded that land should be set aside for the tribes' freedmen to settle.[40] However, similar instances of racial violence throughout the Deep South encouraged African American freedmen to migrate west.

BLACK MIGRATION WEST, 1870-1889

Blacks perceived Indian Territory and later Oklahoma as a promised land of sorts, but most westbound migrants did not travel to Indian Territory during the beginning of peak Black migration during the 1870s. Many went to Kansas, and later to Indian Territory with mixed results.[41] By 1874 Indian Territory freedmen in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations were still without rights. The freedmen controversy remained a point of contention, which was a response to social changes following the legal emancipation of Native American slaves in 1866.[42] Meanwhile, African American freedmen experienced extreme violence from Confederate sympathizers throughout rural Texas due to the state's lack of government oversight throughout the Reconstruction Era.

With freedom realized, Black Americans sought refuge from violence and institutional racism. African American freedmen understood their entitlement to United States citizenship. Black Texans, for example, expressed this sentiment through **"freedom colonies**"—unorganized rural settlements established by former slaves

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[39] John B. Sanborn to James Harlan, January 8, 1866.

[40] Kappler, *Indian Affairs vol. 2*, 919; *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869* (Washington: G.P.O, 1870), 399. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081679197&view=1up&seq=7.

[41] Sharon Holland & Tiya Miles, *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Duke University Press, 2008), 4-5.

[42] Grinde & Taylor, "Red vs. Black," 212-213; Barbara Krauthammer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 11.

following the Civil War.[43] The Lonestar state was home to hundreds of freedom colonies between 1870 and 1890. Most failed to become organized towns. One motivation of this fact could be the distrust of local authority within the African American community due to racial profiling and disinterest from Texas authorities who aimed to maintain the racial status quo of Black subservience.[44] Texas freedmen found it difficult to acquire fertile land legally. In fact, southern Black landownership reached a little over one percent by 1870.[45]

A number of factors made racial violence possible throughout the Deep South. Texas, for example comprised Confederate sympathizers or White supremacists throughout the region, and the state's size made it difficult for underfunded federal officials to patrol throughout its sparsely populated rural areas.[46] As a result of such danger, thousands of freedmen in rural Texas fled to more urban areas like San Antonio, Waco, and Austin. Nonetheless, most Black Texans remained in Texas' rural areas. This made two ways in which Texas Blacks settled: in urban cities like Houston or rural areas forming "freedom colonies."[47] Nonetheless, employment was as important as land to Black Texans. The inability to find steady work drove many to Kansas in 1875.[48] By 1879, this eventual mass movement of African Americans from Texas alarmed Whites throughout the state. Texas news articles warned of the effects mass Black migration would have on the state's agricultural sector largely composed of

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[43] Thad Sitton & James Conrad, *Freedom Colonies: Independent Black Texans in the Time of Jim Crow* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 1.
[44] Sitton & Conrad, *Freedom Colonies*, 3; Nell Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction,* (New York: W.W. Norton 1976), 83.
[45] Sitton & Conrad, *Freedom Colonies*, 2-3.
[46] James Smallwood, Barry Crouch, and Larry Peacock, *Murder and Mayhem*: *The War of Reconstruction in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 3. Michelle M. Mears, *And Grace Will Lead Me Home*: *African American Freedmen Communities of Austin, Texas, 1865-1928* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2009), 10-11.
[47] Mears *And Grace*, 11 & 65.
[48] George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: a Composite Autobiography* vol. 4 (Texas Narratives Parts 1 & 2) (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1973), 2; Mears, *And Grace*, 64.

African American farmers. Overall, an estimated 12,000 Black Texans made the journey to Kansas. Many migrated from the state's east-central counties. Meanwhile, some Black Texans traveled by railroad through Denison and Sherman, Texas, on route to Parsons, Kansas. While cash strapped migrants made the trek by wagon through parts of Arkansas and Indian Territory.[49]

The first mass migration of African Americans, known as the **Exoduster Movement**, occurred in 1879.[50] Henry Adams, a former slave from Georgia, helped propel this mass migration. During Reconstruction, Adams assisted with improving the status of Black southerners. He traveled to racially violent Louisiana parishes, encouraging Black voting and support of the Republican Party throughout the 1870s.[51] In a testimony to the senate on the so-called "negro exodus," Adams proclaimed his ambitions for a new political order predicated on the civil rights of African Americans and the right to vote without fear of White intimidation.[52] Adams' first experience with Black migration schemes began with the Colonization Council—a group of former Black soldiers dedicated to the interest of African American migration to Africa or a United States territory. His organization petitioned the federal government to assist with southern African Americans, by supporting "colonization" to an area other than the South away from racial violence and political oppression.

1877 marked a pivotal year for the Colonization Council. It sent a petition to newly elected President Rutherford B. Hayes demanding federal aid for Liberian

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[49] Peggy Hardman, "Exodus of 1879," *Handbook of Texas Online,* accessed November 09, 2015, http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ume02; *Denison Daily News*, December 1879, accessed November 9, 2015, http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth327414/; Painter, *Exodusters*, 200; Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 135.

[50] *Report and Testimony of the Select Committee of the United States Senate to Investigate the Causes of the Removal of the Negroes From the Southern States to the Northern States*, 46th Cong. 693, pt. 1 (1880), ix.

[51] Painter, *Exodusters*, 84-5.

[52] *Select Comm. to Investigate the Causes*, 46th Cong. 693, pt. 1 (1880), x. Painter, *Exodusters* 76.

emigration or a United States Territory unless the federal government had their "lost rights restored."[53] Later that year, Adams wrote a letter to the American Colonization Society—a predominately White organization dedicated to the emigration of African Americans to Liberia—expressing interest in emigration assistance. However, Adams left Louisiana for New Orleans in 1878 due to a government subpoena to testify to Congress on Black voter suppression in Louisiana. Returning to Louisiana would have likely caused Adams harm from White supremacist groups.[54] Adams continued working with the Colonization Council and American Colonization Society on the cause of Liberian emigration throughout his time in New Orleans, but also advocated for Black southern migration to Kansas as an alternative for the brief time it gained national traction in 1879. However, Adams' awareness of Kansas migration occurred because of the efforts of men like Benjamin "Pap" Singleton who dedicated his life to the cause of Black migration to Kansas.[55]

Like Henry Adams, "Pap" Singleton was another well-known figure of the Exoduster movement.[56] Singleton, of Tennessee, saw Black migration as the best path for Black prosperity. While Adams primarily focused on Black voting and political participation, Singleton emphasized Black landownership—a status cash-strapped Black Tennesseans found hard to attain. As a result, Kansas attracted Singleton during his first visit to the state in 1873. Kansans, according to Singleton, would be friendly toward the plight of prospective poor Black migrants due to much cheaper land and a Republican legislature which generally supported Black migration and civil rights.[57] From 1874 to 1875, rumors regarding free transportation to Kansas fueled early Black migration to Kansas from Tennessee and Kentucky through fliers and newspapers.[58] Singleton, during this period, participated in a popular convention predicated on

[53] Painter, *Exodusters,* 88.
[54] Painter, *Exodusters,* 96-100.
[55] Painter, *Exodusters,* 107.
[56] Painter, *Exodusters,* 108-110.
[57] Painter, *Exodusters,* 113.
[58] Painter, *Exodusters,* 146-7.

popularizing the notion of Kansas migration to a large audience in Tennessee. Black leaders collected money from Black families in preparation for Kansas migration. They often traveled by rail and steamboat from Tennessee. Overall, 9,500 Black migrants from Kentucky and Tennessee made their way to Kansas. Singleton's Dunlap Colony, and the Kansas Black town of Nicodemus were important destinations for Black migrants able to afford the lengthy trip.

In 1878, Benjamin Singleton and others founded the Edgefield Real Estate and Homestead Association in Dunlap Colony, located in eastern Kansas. The organization sponsored meetings and festivals in an effort to encourage migration to the settlement. With its mass support from some of the hundreds and even thousands of attendees to these events, the association continued their work of Kansas migration throughout the 1880s. However, Singleton's Dunlap Colony, with its mostly unfertile land, lacked Nicodemus' popularity. The town of Nicodemus began with thirty migrants from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi in 1877.[59] The town made national headlines and hearsay in Black communities throughout the North and South, influencing eventual Oklahoma Black town founder, Edward McCabe. In 1878, McCabe traveled to Kansas from Chicago as a result of good press regarding Nicodemus' initial prosperity in its early years.[60] Meeting with a friend from Chicago—who had originally traveled to Kansas to join with Benjamin Singleton's settlement—heard about the Black town through a conversation prompting him and McCabe to travel and settle in Nicodemus in 1878. He made it in time to see the influx of fellow African Americans during the "exodus" of 1879 and begin his political career, becoming state auditor of Kansas in 1882—the highest state political office held by an African American during the period.

Overall the "exodus" of 1879 consisted of an estimated 6,000 African Americans from Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana.[61] The trip to Kansas consisted of hardship for many as White southerners aimed to halt the Exoduster Movement. For White planters

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[59] Norman Crockett, *The Black Towns*, 6-8.
[60] Painter, *Exodusters,* 153.
[61] Painter, *Exodusters,* 184.

especially, losing thousands of Blacks would likely drain the labor source of cheap agricultural services poor African Americans provided throughout the region. Newspapers published propaganda from railroad companies dispelling rumors of free transportation for Black migrants as well as letters from Black Exodusters in Kansas concerning their poor economic conditions. Meanwhile, riverboats—an important source of transportation for many Exodusters—failed to stop for Black passengers along the Mississippi River.[62] In fact, White southerners accosted Kansas-bound African Americans along river banks. Reports from Exodusters, found in this predicament, include violent encounters from Whites wanting to deter Black movement to Kansas.[63] Nonetheless, Benjamin Singleton's dedication to Black migration led to Kansas reaching a total of 40,000 African Americans by 1880—the second largest Black population of any western state or territory aside from Texas. [64] However, land openings in Indian Territory and economic difficulty in Kansas led some Black Americans to seek relief in Indian Territory.

Economic factors affected Black settlement in Texas and Kansas. It proved difficult for freedmen to obtain employment and land. Most Exodusters were unable to find steady work. Nonetheless, the Exodusters set a precedent for additional Black migration to the American West with large numbers of Kansas migrants leaving for Nebraska and Oklahoma throughout the 1880s. Exodusters, like Edward McCabe eventually gained interest in the Unassigned Lands in central Indian Territory. Meanwhile, Benjamin Singleton continued to move groups of African Americans to Kansas throughout the 1880s. McCabe, along with other ambitious Black migrants,

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[62] Painter, *Exodusters,* 195.

[63] Painter, *Exodusters,* 196-7.

[64] Martin Dann, "From Sodom to the Promised Land: E. P. McCabe and the Movement for Oklahoma Colonization," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 3 (1974), accessed November 4, 2014, http://www.kshs.org/p/kansas-historical-quarterly-from-sodom-to-the-promised-land/13246; Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Froniter*, 135.

joined to form settlements in the Unassigned Lands.[65] But, the controversy surrounding Native American freedmen became a tug-of-war in Indian Territory's Unassigned Lands in the midst of disillusionment from some Exodusters looking for a safe and prosperous space.[66]

FREEDMEN CONTROVERSY AND FATE OF THE UNASSIGNED LANDS, 1880-1889

Settler interest in the Unassigned Lands began in 1880 with mixed results due to its checkered history. The Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations requested that their freedmen settle in the Unassigned Lands; however, government officials did not come to a decision regarding the matter. This confusion led to a period of attempts to settle on the Unassigned Lands by a variety of Black and White settler organizations.[67] The most prominent Black settler society during the 1880s was the Freedmen's Oklahoma Association formed by Hannibal C. Carter and James Milton Turner in 1881. Carter and Turner created the organization, "To unite in bonds of fraternity aid and protection of all acceptable colored persons of good character...by securing to them lands and homes in the unoccupied Territories of the United States."[68]

While we know little about Hannibal Carter's background, James Milton Turner supported Black migration from the Deep South for much of the late nineteenth century. Originally focusing his efforts on Black education as the best form of Black progress and uplift in the 1870s, Turner founded the Colored Emigration Aid Association to provide relief for Exodusters later in the decade, which soon introduced him to Indian

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[65] "Materials Relating to Benjamin Singleton," 65; Benjamin "Pap" Singleton Scrapbook, 17, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas. Kansas Memory, accessed May 24, 2015, http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/211642/; Painter, *Exodusters*, 257; Tolson, "The Negro in Oklahoma Territory," 1-2.
[66] Painter, *Exodusters,* 258-61.
[67] Arthur Lincoln Tolson, "The Negro in Oklahoma Territory," 1.
[68] Tolson, "The Negro in Oklahoma Territory," 2. From Articles of Incorporation, No. 2076, Office of the Secretary of State of Illinois, Springfield, Illinois, 1-3.

Territory and the Unassigned Lands. The Freedmen's Oklahoma Association only lasted a few months due to the federal government ruling all settlement in the Unassigned Lands illegal. Disputes between the Cherokee Nation and their former slaves became a focal point for his desire to help the Black community as he continued efforts to develop a settlement of former slaves of the Five Tribes. In addition, Turner's belief in Black progress influenced his prejudice of Native Americans.[69] In a letter in 1883 to a Congressmen, Turner questioned the possibility of the Native American community withstanding "civilization," compared to Blacks who "show a desire for the text books…"[70] Overall, Turner's rhetorical goal echoed African American uplift ideology of the period—a mode Black intellectual thought dedicated to self-help and insular community building.[71]

Uplift ideology focused on social and financial mobility of the Black community. Building a self-sufficient Black town or community during the nineteenth century was not only practical for the purpose of protection and financial stability. It was also a political statement because the general American populace throughout the country's history questioned African Americans' capacity to govern themselves. Nevertheless, the tenets of racial uplift ideology had its limitations. First, class distinctions consumed racial uplift ideology. Thought and faith leaders of the Black community attached the notion of "progress" and "civilization" to the better-off and educated upper crust of the Black community in an effort to downplay connotations of Black inferiority.[72]

In addition, Black leaders, bound to the ethos of racial uplift ideology, sought the help of the White elite. Prominent Black leaders like Booker T. Washington embodied the ethos of Black uplift ideology, by embracing Black independence through hard work,

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[69] Gary R. Kremer, *James Milton Turner and the Promise of America: the Public Life of a Post-Civil War Black Leader* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 131-33.
[70] Turner to James H. McLean, June 2, 1883. Quoted in Kremer, *James Milton Turner*, 133.
[71] Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*: *Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 3. For more on the development of Black racial uplift during the 1880s see pages 34-6.
[72] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, xiv.

perseverance and Christian morality. Washington, for example, made connections with White businessmen and donors to fund projects for his school—the Tuskegee Institute—and Black towns like Mound Bayou in Mississippi throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Tuskegee Institute maintained a large apparatus of agents, publications, and forms of musical entertainment to woo northern White philanthropists to support the "advancement of the Black race."[73] Meanwhile. Charles Banks, a prominent leader of the Black town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, maintained a good relationship with Washington and his Tuskegee Institute which enabled Banks to network with wealthy philanthropists to invest in his town.

By 1880, Turner and other African Americans perceived the Unassigned Lands as an opportunity for African American social progress. They aimed for middle class Blacks who symbolized the ethos of Black self-help.[74] It caught the attention of news publications and the federal government thereafter. The Freedmen's Oklahoma Association sent agents to southern states for recruits. They promised hopeful migrants 160 acres of land in Oklahoma based on the 1866 treaties.[75] However, a government official, in 1882, deemed the intrusion of African American freedmen as taking advantage of Native American tribes. That same official also said that the attempt to settle Black Americans in the Unassigned Lands would only "subject them [African Americans] to disappointment, hardship, and suffering."[76] This, however, was the precursor to something larger.

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[73] Henry S. Enck, "Tuskeggee Institute and Northern White Philanthropy: A Case Study in Fundraising, 1900-1915" *The Journal of Negro History* 65 (1980): 337-38.

[74] Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 4.

[75] Tolson, "The Negro in Oklahoma Territory," 2-3. From the *Missouri Republican*, April 23, 1881. For statistics of Negro population in Oklahoma following 1889 Land Run see page 21. Tolson writes, "...there were approximately 1,643 colored men and 1,365 colored women who had settled in the area within a year following the Run of 1889."

[76] "Occupation by Settlers of Portion of Indian Territory", in *The Executive Documents of the Senate of the United States for the First Session, Forty-Seventh Congress, 1881-*82 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882,) 2 & 4, accessed May 25, 2015, https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=yBw2AQAAIAAJ&rdid=book-yBw2AQAAIAAJ&rdot=1.

OKLAHOMA'S BLACK TOWNS, 1890-1910

The Unassigned Lands became an unorganized territory known as Oklahoma Territory which was located in western present-day Oklahoma from 1890 to 1907. Businessmen founded several Black towns throughout Indian and Oklahoma Territory during this period, which became known as the **All-Black Town Movement**.[77] With his Exoduster background, Edward McCabe garnered national attention, because he aimed to make Oklahoma Territory an all-Black state. To complete this task, he promoted his towns to suffering Black southern migrants. However, the failure of railroad acquisition dampened chances for Black towns to diversify their economy beyond agriculture.[78]

African American migrants to Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory faced environmental and social challenges. For example, the *New York Times* reported crop failures during the movement's first year in 1890.[79] The Exoduster Movement came and went. Black southern farmers looked for other means of social and economic freedom. An increase in cotton production costs, following the Civil War, affected Black farmers attempting to make a decent living from cash cropping. [80] Edward McCabe sought to meet the needs of Black migrants in his town of Langston but failed.

McCabe moved from Kansas to Oklahoma Territory in early 1890 following unsuccessful bids for a third term as Kansas state auditor and for register of Kansas' treasury. And with the help of Charles Robbins, a White land speculator, and William Eagleson, a prominent Black Kansan founded Langston City in central present-day Oklahoma. Owning most of the town's vacant land lots, McCabe published the *Langston City Herald*, to promote migration from southern states like Texas, Arkansas, and

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[77] "The All Black Towns in Oklahoma," last modified December 31, 2004, http://www.hannibalbjohnson.com/the-all-Black-towns-in-oklahoma/.

[78] Bonnie Lynn-Sherow,*Red Earth* , 32 & 60-3.

[79] "Affairs at Oklahoma."*New York Times*, Jul 02, 1890, http://search.proquest.com/docview/94817883?accountid=12964.

[80] Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus*, 7, 5, & 42.

Louisiana.[81] The town made national headlines during its early years.[82] However, Langston migrants suffered from poverty due to the region's droughty conditions during the 1890s. Several news publications of the day reported that Langston's hungry inhabitants lived in tents, and feared a race war in Oklahoma Territory.[83] McCabe's inflated population of Blacks in the area aroused racial tensions. *The New York Times*, for example, warned of an assassination attempt on McCabe if he were to be appointed governor of Oklahoma Territory.[84] A year later, in 1891, McCabe claimed to have 100,000 Blacks coming to Langston in two years.[85] While African Americans never achieved over ten percent of the territory's population in the decade, McCabe attempted to expand his influence by founding the town of Liberty in 1893.[86]

McCabe's failure to obtain a railroad depots for his towns stunted their growth.[87] Later Black towns of the twentieth century that followed added to the All Black Town Movement's failures. They were shells of McCabe's political ambition. With issues surrounding Langston and other Black towns in Oklahoma, McCabe's political influence culminated in the development of the Colored Agricultural and Normal University in 1897—known today as Langston University. McCabe encouraged the Territorial Governor of Oklahoma Territory to establish a school for African Americans.[88] Langston University exuded tenets of Booker T. Washington's Black uplift ideology, but the school's first president, Inman E. Page attempted to introduce a balanced curriculum

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[81] Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 144-46.

[82] "To Make a Negro State: Westernizing Black Men in Oklahoma," *New York Times,* February 28, 1890, http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archivefree/pdf?res=9E05E5DE153BE533A2575BC2A9649C94619ED7CF.

[83] Crockett, *Black Towns*, 22.

[84] "To Make a Negro State," *New York Times,* February 28, 1890.

[85] "Oklahoma for the Blacks," *New York Times,* October 1891, http://search.proquest.com/docview/94836820?accountid=12964.

[86] Crocket, *Black Towns*, 26.

[87] Crockett, *Black Towns*, 25; Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit*, 112-14.

[88] Jimmie Lewis Franklin, *Journey Toward Hope: a History of Blacks in Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 28-9.

with liberal arts along with industrial education—agriculture, carpentry, etc.[89] For Black conservative leaders like Washington, industrial education had practical purposes for the majority of Black Americans in the rural South compared to what Washington characterized as "abstract knowledge"—history, language, and literature. Writing on the importance of industrial education in 1903, Washington argued "by the side of industrial training should always go mental and moral training, but the pushing of mere abstract knowledge into the head means little."[90] Nonetheless, Langston University experienced turmoil through much of the late nineteenth and twentieth century regarding the school's academic focus: Industrial education or liberal arts education; perhaps, a reflection of the struggles many Langston inhabitants faced, which some Black leaders perceived as advantageous to their personal ambitions.[91]

Some twentieth century Black towns remain like Red Bird, which incorporated in 1904. It began as a settlement within the Creek Territory, and used Indian Territory's Native heritage to contrast its progress and ambition with White townships. Testimonies from Red Bird's inhabitants displayed strong connections to Blackness. Speaking on Red Bird's social conditions, the wife of a Red Bird businessman wrote on the destruction of "the painted Indian on the war path, and the desperado, which has made way for civilization."[92] Later towns, like Boley, took a more militant stance. A prominent citizen of Boley told a reporter, in 1905, the town welcomed people of other races to visit the town although they have a sign that said "White man, read and run."[93] Even if true, the town struggled to take advantage of its militant attitude. Approximately 1000 people

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[89] Jimmie Lewis Franklin,*Journey Toward Hope* , 68.

[90] Booker T. Washington, "Industrial Education for the Negro," 1903, http://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/industrial-education-for-the-negro/.

[91] Zella J. Black Patterson,*Langston University: a History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1979), 26-39 & 265.

[92] Red Bird Investment Company, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, Ok, accessed May 3, 2015, http://digitalprairie.ok.gov/cdm/ref/collection/culture/id/103, 5.

[93] "The Town of Boley: a Community of Colored People"*Boley Progress* June 1905.

lived there by 1907—the same year of Oklahoma statehood.[94] Most Oklahoman Black towns failed to achieve substantial populations. Reasons varied but racism and a low number of migrants played a large role. Oklahoma's Democrat-dominated state legislature enacted racist policies which discouraged the Black vote and enforced segregation.[95] The Black population in the American West remained at two percent until World War II. Some towns likely dissolved and settled around more thriving ones to maintain some autonomy and social freedom.[96] Nonetheless, the twentieth century, a time of social and industrial change, encouraged other migrants to find new paths of opportunity as Black settlers experienced crop failures and falling prices for cash crops and produce.[97]

THE LEGACY OF BLACK TOWNS AND "BLACK WALL STREET"

The development of Tulsa's Greenwood district reflects not only the more industrial and mechanized path of the country at the turn of the century, but also the legacy of self-sufficiency marked by men like Edward McCabe and James Milton Turner during the All Black Town Movement. Rather than rely on agriculture to earn a decent living, some Blacks thrived on a service economy sparked by the discovery of oil surrounding Tulsa. The connection of Greenwood to other sectors of Tulsa's economy provided Greenwood with prominence and stability. This, in fact, gave Greenwood an incredible amount of African American prosperity compared to Black towns that emerged decades before.

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[94] *Population of Oklahoma and Indian Territory*, 32; Crockett, *The Black Towns*, 73-75.
[95] Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 151.
[96] Booker T. Washington, "Boley: A Negro Town in the American West," 1908, accessed November 24, 2015, http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/resources/documents/ch19_05.htm.
[97] Melissa Stuckey, "All Men Up: Race, Rights, and Power in the All-Black Town of Boley, Oklahoma, 1903-1939" (PhD diss. Yale University, 2009), 34-6; Sarah Deutsch "Being American in Boley," 117; Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 151.

The model of many Oklahoma Black towns contained irony. While towns, like Langston, sold a dream of economic independence and removal of White influence and racism, they needed amenities like railroad depots to make their towns more attractive and to bring product like timber and crops to market. Railroads companies—controlled by White businessmen—often did not have interest in placing depots in Black towns. During this period, railroad companies promoted the scenic pleasures of using railway transit for travelers on their way to popular destinations. This notion, of course, did not include traveling through predominately Black towns in a country with emerging Jim Crow laws supporting segregation and banning miscegenation. All in all, the scenic elements of railroad boosterism coincided with the confinement of Native Americans on reservations, which opened up additional space for tracks and paths for riders' viewing pleasure. Some Black towns like Boley managed to acquire a railroad depot. However, White businessmen co-founded the town as an experiment surrounding the debates on the capability of Blacks to govern themselves. Indeed, the growth of Tulsa, Oklahoma emerged from the sprawl of urbanization during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the American West.[98]

Tulsa incorporated in 1898. Originally a small city, its population exploded from 1,300 people in 1900 to 90,000 in the 1920s. The discovery of oil fueled Tulsa's population explosion as African American newcomers to the area soon developed the Greenwood District—popularly dubbed "Black Wallstreet"—to service a variety of needs for Tulsa's White majority. Greenwood also met the needs of a "Black" downtown, due to the culture of segregation existing since the town's founding. Greenwood consisted of a variety of shops, churches, and a hospital to service the ill of Tulsa's Black community. However, racial animosity and business interests caused the violent destruction of Tulsa's "Black Wallstreet" during the **Tulsa Race Riot** of 1921.[99] Tulsa's

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[98] Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 164-5.
[99] Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the* West, 196-7.

racial landscape reflected what a noted scholar described as "not one city, but two."[100] The city shared a demography similar to the rest of Oklahoma in that most Black Tulsans hailed from the Deep South. Black Tulsa grew alongside the town's White community. However, the Greenwood District developed years after Tulsa's founding in 1905. Founded in Tulsa's northeast section by a group of Blacks who purchased the strip, Greenwood boasted several Black-owned businesses by Oklahoma statehood in 1907. Overall, Greenwood's businesses flourished until May of 1921. By that time, several Black establishments thrived in Greenwood: restaurants, theatres, and offices of Black lawyers and doctors. [101]

The Tulsa Race Riot occurred between May 31 and June 1, and involved an interaction between a White and Black teenager. Sarah Page—a White elevator operator in the Drexel building located in downtown Tulsa—accused Dick Rowland, a Black shoe shiner, of assaulting her in the Drexel building's elevator. Once word spread throughout the town of the accusation—through an initial headline regarding the incident in a local newspaper—a mob of angry and armed White residents marched to the downtown jail. However, Black Greenwood residents met the angry protesters with guns in an effort to protect Rowland from lynching without due process.[102]

The Tulsa Race Riot culminated from several elements in Tulsa and throughout the United States at-large. First, crime mired Tulsa; the city had corrupt law enforcement. In fact, a similar event happened a year earlier in May of 1920 when a White mob lynched a White teenager accused of murder. Second, the Tulsa Race Riot was one of the several violent race riots throughout the early twentieth century which took place in Charleston, South Carolina, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Illinois, Knoxville,

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[100] Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 14.
[101] Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, 14-16.
[102] Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, 45-70.

Tennessee, and Omaha, Nebraska.[103] Third, White Tulsans carried a local racial animosity for the Greenwood district due to its good location for business opportunities. In fact, the mayor of Tulsa during the time of the race riot proclaimed that "a large portion of this [Greenwood] district is well suited for industrial purposes rather than residences."[104]

The Tulsa Race Riot was, arguably, the worst race riot in American history. An estimated 300 Tulsans died during the incident. It culminated in the destruction of 1,256 buildings—churches, businesses, etc.—throughout the Greenwood District.[105] Tulsan officials had much to do with Greenwood's destruction. Police officials sought the help of 500 White Tulsans to subdue Black outrage over Dick Roland's imprisonment. Testifying on the race incident, the Tulsa police department instructed, Laurel Buck, a White Tulsan to "get a gun, and get busy and try to get a nigger."[106]

Indeed, the Tulsa Race Riot reflected the unease of race in Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. While African Americans, during Reconstruction, looked to present-day Oklahoma as a beacon of hope due to its status as an unorganized territory and not a state prior to 1907, the influx of White settlers and induction of Oklahoma as a state participated in the destruction of Black wealth and community in Tulsa. The race riot's devastation lingers in North Tulsa where Greenwood once stood. As one writer eerily put it: "The scars of

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[103] James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: America's Worst Race Riot and its Legacy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 58; Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land* , 16.

[104] Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 197.

[105] *Tulsa Race Riot: a Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (2001): https://www.okhistory.org/research/forms/freport.pdf, 12-3; James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: America's Worst Race Riot and its Legacy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 6-7.

[106] Quoted in *Tulsa Race Riot: a Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (2001): https://www.okhistory.org/research/forms/freport.pdf, 159.

the riot were still visible in abandoned concrete driveways and ghostly sidewalks, the exposed foundations of long-gone houses and large expanses of empty space."[107]

CONCLUSION

Lucinda Davis and A.G. Belton struggled finding their place in America. They had different backgrounds and challenged the racialized vision of American society due to their identifying with social groups beyond the interests of the American social system during the late nineteenth century. They both refused a "Black" identity. Instead, Davis attached her Blackness to her Creek Indian heritage; Belton expanded his Black identity to include his African ancestry. Yet, when we think of Reconstruction Era America, the plight of African Americans in the Deep South drives the historical narrative. However, Oklahoma tells a more complicated story concerning freedom and identity. Oklahoma represented the hopes and dreams for some African Americans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Black leaders like Edward McCabe perceived Oklahoma as a space for Black protection from White resentment. Meanwhile, Black Indians sought government intervention to gain full membership into their respective tribes. For other African Americans, freedom during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century meant economic independence and full citizenship through land acquisition—a common American ideal held by White settlers dating back to the Colonial United States. For Black Indians of the Five Tribes, however, freedom meant the maintenance of their land and identity.

The Five Tribes attached sovereignty to their land, because it represented freedom from paternal government officials wanting to open lands in the West for settlement, by White Americans (with African American settlers often an afterthought). The dual identity of Blackness and Indianness for former slaves of the Five Tribes placed them in an ambiguous position between freedom and second-class citizenship.

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[107] James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: America's Worst Race Riot and its Legacy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 321.

The Black identity of African Creeks, Seminoles, Chickasaws, Cherokees and Choctaws marked these Black Indians as second class citizens within their respective nations in certain cases with regard to tribal land and political participation. Additionally, the plight of Indian sovereignty also impacted their Indian identity as they closely associated with the culture of their American Indian Nation. Of course, the plight of Black Native Americans in Indian Territory was lost among the African American community—many of whom desperate for a better life and to demonstrate a mode of Black progress following slavery and lack of opportunity as second-class citizens. Nevertheless, some instances of a common Black identity existed between some groups of Black Indians and African Americans in Indian Territory.

In 1898, a group of freedmen formed the Inter-national Afro-American League in an effort to protect the interests of African Americans. The organization, made up of Black Indians from the Five Tribes, fought against political currents during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: African American encroachment on tribal lands, lack of rights in their respective nations—particularly with the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, and the loss of the Five Tribes' sovereignty. Meanwhile, other Black Indians expressed interest in emigration to Liberia in the midst of Indian Territory's political turmoil during the late nineteenth century.[108] Accounts of Liberian emigration continued throughout this period as some leaders of the Five Tribes expressed interest in moving to Mexico to maintain their status as sovereign nations. While some Black Indians and African Americans found common ground in their quest for a place to call their own, Black towns like Boley—founded in 1903 in the Creek portion of eastern Indian Territory—often distanced itself from its Black, yet Indian counterparts.

Booker T. Washington, a famed African American leader of the time, wrote about Boley in 1908. He used the town as an example of Black progress and compared its Black

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[108] David A.Y.O. Chang, "Where Will the Nation Be at Home?: Race, Nationalism, and Emigration Movements in the Creek Nation" in Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, eds., *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 80-1.

settlers to earlier settlers of the 1870s. Washington argued that nineteenth century migrants were not industrious enough to thrive compared to twentieth century Black settlers. Towns like Boley, according to Washington, instilled morality and industriousness in its citizenry. However, he held complicated ideas regarding the dual identity of Indian Territory's Black Indian population; on the subject Washington proclaimed "There are still, I am told, among the 'natives' some negroes who cannot speak the English language, and who have been so thoroughly bred in the customs of the Indians that they have remained among the hills with the tribes by whom they were adopted."[109] Clearly, Washington demonstrated his skewed and commonly-helped perception regarding Indians who have "gone back"—or receded in the face of White settlement. Washington also expressed a notion of unity between Black Indians and the southern African American migrants he championed throughout his career when he wrote that Black Indians "do not shun the White man and his civilization, but, on the contrary, rather seek it, and enter, with the Negro immigrants, into competition with the White man for its benefits."[110]

Washington visited places other than Boley. In 1905, he gave a speech in Muskogee a prominent town located in Creek Territory—present-day eastern Oklahoma. Surprised with the mixed crowed of the 7000 attendees who were Black, White, and red, Washington gave a rousing speech to his attentive crowd on the issue of industrial education for African Americans.[111] Washington did not mention anything regarding the Territory's Indian or Black Indian populace whatsoever, which would have likely troubled some of his Indian audience. His speech reflected his desire for a "true" and

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[109] Booker T. Washington, "Boley: a Negro Town in the American West," *The Outlook* (1908): https://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/reader/trial/directory/1890_1914/04_ch19_05.htm.

[110] Booker T. Washington, "Boley: a Negro Town in the American West," *The Outlook* (1908): https://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/reader/trial/directory/1890_1914/04_ch19_05.htm.

[111] *The Muskogee Cimeter*, November 23, 1905,

"red" Indian, which for him disappeared in the throes of White (and Black) civilization. Booker T. Washington complained about this matter in his article on his visit to Boley writing: "when I inquired, as I frequently did, for the 'natives' it almost invariably happened that I was introduced, not to an Indian, but a Negro….I was introduced later to one or two other 'natives' who were not Negroes, but neither were they, as far as my observation went, Indians. They were, on the contrary, White men."[112]

Black Texans were the main source of citizens for Oklahoma's Black towns. Thousands were desperate to find refuge from Post-Civil War violence. This came at the expense of Native American freedmen who had a similar, but different plight. Many Native freedmen did not identify as African American. They were Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole. The migration of Texas freedmen fanned racial flames between Native freedmen and the Five Tribes. Consequently, relations between both groups of freedmen worsened during the twentieth century. A Creek freedmen, commenting on relations between both groups said that "it was those state niggers from Texas that spoiled it for us…"[113] All in all, Oklahoma and the West in general did not become the promised land as many African Americans had hoped. African Americans like A.G. Belton found it difficult to prosper. Some stayed in Oklahoma. Others moved to northeastern cities. Lucinda Davis likely struggled navigating her freedom and identity being both Black and Creek. But, she settled in Tulsa, Oklahoma, located in the vicinity where she saw bloodshed over the debates concerning not only the freedom of African Americans, but also Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Seminoles slaves.

Lucinda Davis lived through several occurrences in Indian Territory and later: the Civil War of the 1860s, Reconstruction of the 1870s, the All Black Town Movement of the 1890s, Oklahoma Statehood in 1907, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. And while

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[112] Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelvste and the Creek Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 243; *The Booker T. Washington Papers vol. 9: 1906-1908* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 431; David A.Y.O. Chang, "Where Will the Nation Be at Home?," 90-1.

[113] Sameth, "Creek Negroes," 56.

her 1937 interview fails to mention the majority of these occurrences, she may have disagreed with African American settlement and the All Black Town Movement thereafter. Because, it is clear that she was fond of the so-called "Old Creek Way" instilled in her from an early age and aimed to maintain those connections. She may have yearned for the return of a fluid social order dominated by Native American sovereignty and ambiguous roles of Black Creeks within the Creek community. However, Davis' understanding of racial classification with regard to her master naming his slaves "Istilutsi"—meaning "Black man" may have complicated her views on Blackness and therefore cause her to sense some allegiance to her African American counterparts.

Nevertheless, the plight of Black Tulsa—where she lived in her final years—would have had some kind of influence on her own perception of Black treatment in the United States. It is also possible Davis experienced some of the Tulsa Race Riot's after effects as she, and many like her, maintained both Black and Indian identities in a city shrouded in institutionalized racial violence. In this sense, the confusion regarding the definition of "freedmen" also reflected the meaning of Blackness by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. And as Davis saw the erosion of the "Old Creek Way" in her later years during the early twentieth century due to "ill mannered" children, a summation of the "Creek Negro" appeared in a 1908 edition of the *Oklahoma City Times*. The scathing article concluded that the "Creek Negro" was "the most dangerous man on the American continent today…a combination of aboriginal cruelty and ferocity [that] can be found nowhere on earth except in the new state of Oklahoma."[114] A year prior to the article's publication, the development of Oklahoma's constitution declared that "colored" and "negro" applied to people of African descent, whereas "White" or

[114] Quoted in Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelvste and the Creek Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 257.

"White race" applied to Whites and Indians.[115] Nevertheless, the existence of thousands of Black Indians like Davis sharing their stories represents the fluid nature of race in Oklahoma's territorial past. These elements of Blackness and Indianness not only colored Davis' views of her Black and Indian heritage and views of Creek chattel slavery; it also complicated the notion of freedom for a Black Indian like Lucinda Davis. She existed between the gray areas of several identities: Black, Indian, and, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a "second-class" American citizen.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Black identity vary in Indian Territory and the United States before and after the Civil War?
2. What are differences and similarities between the plight of Native and African American freedmen during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?
3. Relations between African Americans and Native Americans are complex. How does Native law reflect these relations?
4. Overall, a small amount of African Americans went West. However, did motives to migrate and settle in the West differ within the Black community?

[115] David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 161.

Writing Prompt

Freedom and Identity are complex; within the context of the American West, identify how African American and Native American freedmen perceived freedom in different ways. Black migration during the nineteenth century had a variety of elements which often contradicted one another. Explain the aims of some Black leaders of the period and the issues migrants faced on the ground in transit and following reaching their destinations. Using threads of Lucinda Davis' and A.G. Belton's story, identify how they represent the plight of African American freedmen and Native American freedmen during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Chapter 9

Eco-ability: The Complex Embodiment of Blind Lemon Jefferson

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Blind Lemon Jefferson and Eco-Ability

Blind Lemon Jefferson was the blues. He played the blues. He traveled like a bluesman, and he was blind, a stereotypical signifier of a blues musician. But more than any of those things, Jefferson played the slide-guitar with a tenderness that matched the sad, strained voice that made him an American music icon. Jefferson first recorded in 1925 at the height of America's Jazz Age. Beginning with Mamie Smith and Her Jazz Hounds' 1920 hit "Crazy Blues," jazz and blues defined American music for the next two decades. Bessie Smith's 1923 contract with Columbia Records, and Ma Rainey's title as "Mother of the Blues" signified the enormous financial potential of the "blues," whether the acoustic guitar-country blues or the jazzy classic blues. Record companies soon noticed the demand for African American blues records—specifically for Black consumers—and created the genre of ethnic music, otherwise known as Race Records, to rival the commercial success of African American women vaudeville singers. Gramophone owners and emerging record executives recognized the potential of reproducing Black music for a mass audience. The female-dominated classic blues needed

a rival, and they found it in the male acoustic-driven country blues.

The "race record" industry called the country blues, the "downhome blues," and found a ready consumer market in both the South and the North following the Great Migration into cities like New York and Chicago. The nostalgia of the past drove many of these Southern migrants to buy blues records. This trend lasted for over a decade and firmly established the race record genre in American popular culture. Blind Lemon Jefferson proved to be key to this success by navigating the color line and making the best of his segregated environment to become the first country blues singer to find national fame in both the South and North. It was the ability to navigate the environment, his eco-ability, that proved to be his success.

Jefferson used his environment to his advantage, whether this environment was physical, social, geographical, or emotional. Physically, Jefferson was born blind. He used his blindness as a stage-name and a performance trope. Socially, his disability was deemed harmless; thus, he could cross lines of segregation because he did not present a threat to the status quo. Geographically, he used his upbringing as a sharecropper in the South for lyrical topics. Emotionally, he pulled on the heartstrings of listeners with his songs of poverty and woe. All of these traits, in turn, appealed to fellow Southerners, as well as Northern migrants nostalgic for home. Finally, his use of eco-ability allowed him a cathartic release to the constraints of Jim Crow restrictions and to the perceived limitations of his blindness. Together, Jefferson used various forms of his environment to make a career and a meaningful life in an era during which he was oppressed both physically and socially. More importantly, opening up avenues for a more fulsome

examination of disabled people's lives showed the possibility of dynamic responses to oppression as well as their potential to use their social environment to survive and thrive. This is eco-ability.

Three interdependent developments, "the Great War, dynamic growth in the agricultural and industrial sectors, and mass migration to cities," contributed to a social change in the country, particularly among urban African Americans.[1] The intersections of race and disability impacted the environment Jefferson survived, and at the same time, thrived. Jefferson challenged notions of ability and crossed the color line to achieve both musical success and social protest. For Jefferson, these changes began in the rural South during the early 20th century. The gravel and dirt roads that singers walked, drove, or hitch-hiked were now paved, reducing travel time considerably, and connected rural Southerners to the rest of America for the first time. Railroad tracks crisscrossed the South, heaving up train depots in just about every town they passed. Travel became synonymous with blues musicians. Both the landscape and the social spaces of the rural South were changing and becoming increasingly connected with the rest of the country, despite the traditional history that the rural South was unchanging. The Black press included articles on downhome blues musicians next to jazz profiles, and the American consumer age had emerged.

The popularity of the country blues took off with the success of race records from artists like Blind Lemon Jefferson in 1926. In some ways, race records conformed to the

[1] R.A. Lawson. *Jim Crow's Counterculture: The Blues and Black Southerners* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 130.

segregated and racist nature of the country and its long tradition of colonialism by taking Black music and creating a national market for it among White consumers. Throughout the 1920s blues musicians began to perform both religious and secular songs in bars, street corners and train depots. The rail and the road led to the big city, connecting the country as never before. The nature of travel was changing, and so was the music. In the church, gospel and "spirituals lose favor to singing" out of the modern hymnals, and "city-born blues and jive take over the jook-joints."[2] Blues musicians played what the various audiences wanted to hear—the pop songs of the day. The popularity of Jefferson and his contemporaries followed their success north into the industrial cities, as they sang songs about life and reworked old spirituals.

Jefferson's first recording on Paramount records, "I Want to Be Like Jesus in my Heart," marked him as one of the first male blues musicians to make a substantial impact as a singer and guitarist. His second recording, the secular "Got the Blues" was the first best-selling blues single by a black male singer, and earned him the title "King of the Country Blues." Blues biographer Giles Oakley even referred to Jefferson as the "archetype of all bluesmen," as record labels tried to copy his success by recruiting dozens of country-blues musicians to northern cities. Jefferson has also been credited with being the first "downhome blues singer" to enjoy commercial success marking the race record genre just as financially viable as vaudeville and jazz records. Over the next three years, Jefferson became the leading recording artist for Paramount Records, who advertised his

[2] Sterling A. Brown. "Negro Folk Expressions: Spirituals, Seculars, Ballads, and Work Songs," *Phylon*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1953), 60.

songs like "Booster Blues" as "real, old-fashioned blues by a real old-fashioned blues player." Paramount released nearly one hundred sides a day in 1926. Eventually, the race record genre outsold vaudeville and jazz releases, marking the 1920s and 1930s as the race record era. The commercial success of the country blues motivated record companies to travel south with portable recording equipment, or to invite southern singers to northern studios on the new system of railroads and highways. Jefferson came north to play music on his own in 1925. He was one of the first artists signed by Paramount Records in 1926 and one of their most successful artists of all time. Jefferson was inducted into the inaugural class of the Blues Hall of Fame nearly a half a century after his death in 1929. His life was short, but his music made an indelible mark on the future of American music.

Race Records and the Country Blues

Jefferson was one of the first male country blues musicians to achieve commercial success in the North and South. The few existing sources of his life and career capture the life of an African American musician who came from nothing and made a career out of music. Music also allowed Jefferson to engage in alternative forms of political participation and countercultural escape despite the segregated music industry. Integral to the popularity of blues music during the early 20th century was the expanding American music marketplace. "Mass culture," Lizabeth Cohen writes, "offered blacks the

ingredients from which to construct a new, urban black culture."[3] Yet, mass culture was not just northern, or urban. In the 1920s, Black Americans increasingly participated in a consumption-driven culture of race records whether they "resided in Chicago's South Side or Mississippi's Delta region."[4] This widespread reach also allowed African American musicians to gain greater independence and influence through cultural forms. Throughout the 1920s, as Jefferson wandered across the dusty east Texas fields in search of barrel houses or caught the trains north to Chicago, the race record commercial genre had begun to emerge. The quick rise of the race record industry during the Roaring Twenties made it a breakout decade for many musical artists. This popularity carried over to the Great Depression era when an estimated 5,500 blues recordings were made by about 1,200 different artists, all classified as race records.[5]

Blues music became a market force. Its sudden success reveals the complex development of race in American music. How Black musicians navigated the segregated world of music and society, while being revered for their talents but separated by the color of their skin, helps explain how a bluesman like Jefferson balanced on the color line. The race record industry, for example, employed African American plantation stereotypes, revealing some of the social anxiety surrounding the increasing number of Black migrants in the North. As Black migrants moved north, they held onto the past because it was where many family members still lived. Whites, noticing the rising population of African

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[3] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 147-148.

[4] Lawson, 131.

[5] Ibid, 129.

Americans in northern cities, expressed their uneasiness through their desire for the way things used to be, equally nostalgic for the past. Both began buying blues records in large numbers. The commercial market associated with the phonograph and the radio were two momentous innovations and played an instrumental role in the rise of blues. Together, they propagated a distinct African American culture through music.

By 1926 blues records were selling between five and six million albums annually, and by 1941 over thirty million were sold each year.[6] During the mid-1930s college-age record collectors were targeted by record labels like Decca Records, who announced that the "new customers were responsible," specifically naming White college students and women.[7] Race records were so popular that White artists began to mimic Black jazz and blues music.[8]

Advertisements for blues records appeared by the hundreds in the nation's foremost Black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, during the 1920s. The *Defender's* record advertising recalled the South as home, enticing readers to participate in that memory, despite the racial stereotypes used to sell the music. The *Defender's* ads for country blues featured artists accompanied with guitars, banjos, and harmonicas. These ads characterized the men as lonely wayfarers journeying to and from the South. Jefferson was portrayed as an old man alone on Christmas Eve in the city, a convict

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[6] Lawson, 130-131; Robert Kraft *Stage to the Studio: Musicians and the Sound Revolution, 1890-1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 59-97.
[7] William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 172.

[8] Blind Lemon Jefferson, "Matchbox Blues," Sundayblues.org (accessed September 1, 2021).

strapped into the electric chair, and a drifting hobo asleep on the scaffolding beneath a freight car. Such images portrayed the destitute environment musicians and disabled were forced to live in. Likewise, many Southern migrants knew something about moving far away. The lyrics and advertisements of race records helped forge a bond among Black readers by presenting the South as shared memory.[9]

An advertisement for Jefferson's song "Matchbox Blues" captures the Southern stereotypes of the shotgun house, mule-drawn wagon, and the imperious Black matriarch. The title of the song, along with the image of the mule-drawn wagon, suggests travel, but with only a suitcase to make the long journey. The image may have been stereotypical, but it was also nostalgic for those already living in northern cities. Jefferson's music then provides the link to the past and the present. Jazz producers already knew the popularity of Black music in the North among White listeners, and race record companies cashed in on their use of downhome stereotypes by marketing them to Southerners, and more specifically, African American migrants in the North. Poverty—moreover, the desire to escape the environment of poverty—drove the migrants. Some musicians were able to capture this longing in their music and lyrics, endearing them to listeners.

One advertisement for Jefferson's "Sunshine Special" captures Northern migrants' sense of respectability as seen in their outfits. From the ad's text it is clear that blindness is part of the advertisement, but still allows Jefferson respectability through his suit and

[9] Mark K. Dolan, "Extra! Chicago *Defender* Race Record Ads Show South from Afar," *Southern Cultures,* Vol. 13, No. 3 (Fall 2007), 107.

tie photograph. He may have been from the South, but he was still cultured. This depiction is a marked contrast from the image of Jefferson with his rope-string guitar and downhome music. While these advertisements drove excitement about migrating north, it also captures the desire for suitable employment. Again, this publicity captures the environment of poverty, yet Jefferson's "Rambler Blues" advertisement shows the lack of work in the South along with the danger of hoboing, something a traveling musician and a blind laborer knew well.[10]

Jefferson's music was popular in the North and South alike. His second blues release in 1926, "Long Lonesome Blues," was the first best-selling country blues record. "Long Lonesome Blues" captures the unique way Jefferson merges rhythm and melody to create the essence of an entire band. While Jefferson is well known for his ability to mimic ragtime rhythms with his guitar work, it was his voice that first struck listeners. His vocal range was unparalleled. When he hit the upper registers, the listener could almost feel the heartbreak in his voice. In the same song he could mimic the howl of a bloodhound, the chug of the railroad trains, or the cry of an angry lover. A friend of Jefferson, Quince Cox, remembered some of his train platform performances: "He could play anything...You hear one of them around a wolf or possum or a coon or something on the track, he could do that good, too...he'd squeal just like a dog. Make it sound good, too."[11]

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Alan B. Govenar and Jay F. Brakefield, *Deep Ellum: The Other Side of Dallas* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2013), 81.

Besides his broad vocal range, Jefferson may be best known for his ability to cover any genre of music. This versatility made his records immediate hits. The effect of Jefferson's success spread the popularity of the guitar-driven blues across the South. "Wasn't nobody else playin' what he played," guitarist Thomas Shaw remembered, adding, "he could play anything you asked him to play."[12] Jefferson shrewdly skirted the line of race and popular music in order to perform a unique set based on particular demographics. This kind of tailoring brought him into proximity with many genres of music, from blues to hillbilly and anything in between. By 1926 Jefferson was recording a variety of music, and more significantly, crossing the music color line.

In the 1920s, blues, swing, and jazz sold well in African American and White markets, and for the first time Black music, as Amiri Baraka has acknowledged, was crossing the color line.[13] Lawson suggests that the advent of the recording industry allowed blues musicians to sing "their stories for the audience of southern black workers—cash-strapped, voteless sharecroppers, stevedores, domestics, levee-camp workers, and loggers."[14] The musical and lyrical creations of Black music reflected divisions within American society and offered a countercultural voice for African Americans. Yet, what makes the blues even more significant is how it came to be accepted by other races as

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[12] Alan B. Govenar. "Blind Lemon Jefferson: The Myth and the Man," *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2000), 8.

[13] Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: The Negro Experience in White America and the Music that Developed from It* (New York: Morrow Paperback, 1963), 87.

[14] Lawson, 1.

well. In this way, the recording studio "permitted indirect exchange" of Black music and culture through "chain stores, local distributors and mail order houses."[15] The country was strictly segregated, but musicians were beginning to break down the color barrier in music.

Bluesmen and women performed in towns and countrysides from the Carolinas to the heart of Texas. Some of these musicians had been playing for years, yet this era marked the first time their music had been recorded and therefore was available throughout the country and eventually the world. Jefferson's songs like "Got the Blues" caught the attention of Black and White musicians alike and were covered or copied for generations. Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter and folklorist John Lomax carried Jefferson's songs into the northeastern cities and drew the rapt attention of White audiences at the Modern Language Association (MLA) conference in 1934. Attendees believed they were listening to the "uncontaminated, original music" of African American folk songs, another lasting impact of American musical colonialism.[16] It was the first time the all-White MLA membership had heard the country blues. Jefferson opened that door, and more than a few blues artists copied his style. "Everybody else was standin' around him, hopin' they could do what he could do," Shaw remarked. "Whenever he pull his guitar out, he was

[15] John S. Otto and Augustus M. Burns, "Black and White Cultural Interaction in the Early Twentieth-Century South: Race and Hillbilly Music," *Phylon*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1974), 414.

[16] *Publications of the Modern Language Association,* 49, Supplement (1934).

the king there."[17] The years after Jefferson's Paramount Recordings marked a golden age for the country blues.

Couchman

The environment of Couchman, Texas, led Jefferson to write "Matchbook Blues" in 1926. There were many times Jefferson felt like the subject from "Matchbook Blues," often part of everyday Black life. Part of Jefferson's presentation involved playing on audiences' empathy for the plight of African Americans and the disabled. It was also something he knew intimately. Nearly half of his songs relate to the disenfranchised and downtrodden, such as "Bad Luck Blues":

> I wanna go home and I ain't got sufficient clothes
> Doggone my bad luck soul
> Wanna go home and I ain't got sufficient clothes
> I mean sufficient, talking about clothes
> Well, I wanna go home, but I ain't got sufficient clothes
>
> I bet my money and I lost it, Lord, it's so
> Doggone my bad luck soul
> Mm, lost it, ain't it so?
> I mean lost it, speakin' about so, now
> I'll never bet on the deuce-trey-queen no more…
>
> I'm gonna run 'cross town, catch that southbound Santa Fe
> Doggone my bad luck soul
> Mm, Lord, that Santa Fe
> I mean the Santy, speakin' about Fe
>
> Be on my way to what they call lovin' Tennessee.

[17] David Evans, "Musical Innovation in the Blues of Blind Lemon Jefferson," *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2000), 107-108.

Kathryn Ervin Jefferson, a distant relative of Lemon, praised him as a "great songster" who "came up the hard way." She listened to him play near the old cotton gin in Wortham Flat, Texas. At this point Jefferson was still a teenager, yet he already knew where to perform, outside the working-class warehouses and cotton engines, as well as what songs to play, the pop songs of the day. The fact that Cox recalls young Lemon performing *inside* the business district of Wortham displays his ability to cross racial divides. Jefferson was so talented that kids, White and Black alike, followed him around just to listen to him play. Mattie Barree Dancer remembered she was "crazy about Blind Lemon" and her older sister Bessie, "claimed to be in love with Lemon." Jefferson was not the only guitar performer in town, yet he is the only one still remembered. Dancer recalled that he often sang "Going to Chicago." It is clear he was transcendent on guitar from a young age and knew he was bound for bigger things. Many blues musicians learned musical techniques at home from their mothers and aunts. It is unclear if this was also the case for a young Jefferson. What is clear is that Jefferson traveled to perform from a young age, just as nearly all country blues musicians had done growing up. Not only would he travel to Chicago in the near future, but his country blues would become a hit all the way north in the Windy City.[18]

Kathryn Jefferson called her relative a "great songster" because he played a variety of genres. He performed ragtime in traveling vaudeville shows, hillbilly music for White working-class laborers outside the cotton warehouses, and string band accompaniment

[18] See Robert Uzzel, *Blind Lemon Jefferson: His Life, His Death, and His Legacy* (Fort Worth: Eakin Press, 2002).

throughout Texas. Jefferson performed on the nearby streets of Grosebeck, Marlin, and Kosse. In Buffalo, Texas, he met a young Sam Lightnin' Hopkins, who went on to cover many of Jefferson's songs. Jefferson often reprimanded his playing exclaiming, "Boy, you got to play it right." By his late teens Jefferson was a songster, performing a variety of music in everything from juke joints to farm parties and sometimes even church picnics. By his twentieth birthday he had performed at medicine and circus shows, Juneteenth celebrations, tent revivals, and sporting events. He even tailored popular songs to ragtime so he could perform dance measures popular in New York City and Chicago, like the Black Bottom and the Charleston. This breadth shows that Harlem Renaissance cultural forms were not confined to Harlem or to the North in general. Black culture was being performed and consumed from the North to the South.

Before long, Jefferson was one of the most popular entertainers in Central Texas with original songs like "Mosquito Moan," a complaint against the common farm pest, and "Rising High Water Blues" about the prevalence of natural disasters in the flat Texas fields. Other songs commented on Black poverty and oppression. Many songs centered on labor and the prison system.[19] "Hangman's Blues," "Prison Cell Blues," "Penitentiary Blues," and "'Lectric Chair Blues" all depict the injustice of the criminal justice system in Texas. Jefferson's friend Arthur Carter stated that while Lemon was always a "joker," he believed strongly in "treating people right," and complained when society did not treat them justly. Nearly all of his topical songs reflect this sense of fairness:

While a mean ol' hangman is waitin' to tighten up that noose

[19] W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 151-152.

Oh, the mean ol' hangman is waitin' to tighten up that noose
Lord, I'm so scared, I'm trembling in my shoes
Jury heard my case and they said my hand was red
Judge heard my case and said my hand was red
And judge, he sentenced me, be hanging 'til I'm dead

Dallas

After World War I, Jefferson left the dusty country towns of Coachman and Wortham behind to find more profitable work in Dallas. In 1900 the Black population of Dallas was less than 10,000, but after WWI it more than doubled. Jefferson remained a musician, but needed work and relocated to Dallas. Even though there were plenty of jobs, his blindness kept him from many of them. The African American entertainment section of Dallas was called Deep Ellum, an area of Elm Street north and east of the downtown district. Here, at Elm Street and Central Avenue was the Central Track railroad stop, where day laborers were taken out to the cotton fields of Collin County and the constant flow of migrants looking for work arrived hourly. Deep Ellum was, according to Jefferson's biographer, "marked by clusters of pawnshops, tailors, second hand clothing stores, shoeshine parlors, cafes, and sporting houses."[20] This description neglects to mention the many working-class bars that also doubled as African American banks. Jefferson knew the bars held the cash from paychecks, along with the men looking to spend it. Referring to the blues singers on Central Track, "Crowds would cluster round them," Paul Oliver described, commenting on how "the coins would clatter—nickels and dimes—in their hats and tin cups."[21] Along with the Central Track railroad platform,

[20] Uzzel, 21.

[21] Paul Oliver, *The Story of the Blues* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 2.

Jefferson found the two best places to perform in Deep Ellum.

"Match Box Blues" captures a number of Jefferson's characteristics: his penchant for travel, the constant search for work, but also his ability to move around the country like any other Black man.

> I'm sitting here wonderin'
> will a matchbox hold my clothes?
> I ain't got so many matches,
> but I got so far to go.

These lyrics capture the eco-ability of being a blues musician. The fact that even a tiny matchbox is too large to hold his goods was not lost on the listener. A matchbox holds nothing but matches, not the cigarettes, just matches to bum a cigarette from a passerby. This song mocks such abject positions many people faced when traveling to find work, without even a cigarette to light, let alone a suitcase to hold clothes. Lawrence Levine believes the theme of using comedy to describe serious disadvantages was common in Black music: "The use of black song as a vehicle for the expression of trouble and woe...was modified by a characteristic optimism which was based upon the strong sense of imminent change that pervaded black thought."[22] The occupation of a traveling songster was a ray of hope for a disadvantaged, impaired Black man. Jefferson spoke openly about his blindness and the lack of employment opportunities it entitled, hoping the matchbox suitcase was only temporary.

Dallas was the place to be for a Texas bluesman. Together, Jefferson and Ledbetter performed the popular songs of the day or topical songs about traveling and

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[22] Lawrence W. Levine. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 261.

work heard in "Silver City Bound," or songs about current events such as "The Titanic." Lead Belly would memorialize his time in Dallas with the song "Blind Lemon Blues," which John Lomax recorded for the Library of Congress six years after Jefferson's death:

> She sit down an' tol' her little boy,
> His wife says, I want son to play the piano a piece.
> Since you been gone so long,
> Let him know what he's done learned.
> Since you been gone.
>
> And the little boy sit down, begin to play,
> His little piano a piece.

The move north from Dallas to Chicago was a momentous decision, but for Jefferson it would pay off. Besides Dallas, Jefferson traveled as far as Houston to perform. He frequently performed with White hillbilly and string-bands like Hobart Smith and Clarence Ashley's Blue Ridge Band, showing that music was performed and consumed by Black and White alike. Like the mobility of African Americans and the disabled, the segregation of music was often crossed. Yet, he was still struggling to make ends meet. Like many other Texan African Americans, Jefferson attempted to supplement his music income with manual labor jobs such as cotton farming or warehouse packing. Yet, manual labor was hard to come by. His blindness was a deterrent for employers, as some jobs required sight, and the stigma of the invalid handicapped was strong. Instead, Jefferson turned to other sources of income. For a summer he was a novice wrestler, traveling throughout central Texas to perform. Even here, the novelty of a disabled wrestler

attracted audiences to the arenas where he was billed as the "Blind Wrestler."[23] Jefferson as a wrestler shows the dearth of available jobs for disabled Americans, but wrestling was also a form of escape from the realities of poverty.

Like wrestling, "The blues," Lawson writes, "were conceived, inherited, and reshaped by aspiring professional musicians who saw music as a countercultural escape from economic and social subservience."[24] Jefferson also knew what forms of eco-ability to use to make a successful living such as performing as a wrestler when it presented a promising financial opportunity. African American musicians like Jefferson did not sit idly by as vassals of White control, but used their music to define themselves and share their struggle. Many Black performers saw themselves as messengers of a counterculture that threatened the dominant White power structure. Black musicians masked their lyrics in order to employ what Du Bois labeled double-consciousness: "One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings."[25] African American musicians used both sides of the color line to achieve success, which also showcased opposing identities. Their double-consciousness allowed for a Black consciousness that was not apolitical or infantile, but socially charged. Lawson suggests interpreting the blues as counterculture allows modern evaluators "to understand that blues musicians were necessarily accepting of prevailing Jim Crow social norms while at

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[23] Antoinette Mitchell, "Blind Lemon Jefferson: The Blind Composer," *Mexia Daily News*, December 18, 1976, 1.

[24] Lawson, xi.

[25] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover, 1994), 2.

the same time hoping to evade or subvert them."[26] Paul Gilroy writes musicians derived "their special power derives from a doubleness, their unsteady location simultaneously inside and outside the conventions, assumptions, and aesthetic rules which distinguish and periodise modernity."[27] The modern blues musician's lyrics also countered traditional African American stereotypes. Sometimes Black consciousness was seen in protest, rather than the subservient representation constructed by folklorists and the record industry. Double consciousness was the counterculture of African Americans, and in this case, the hidden transcripts of blues music.

Some African Americans supplemented their incomes or even made a career out of music. Yet, odd jobs, such as music performances, wrestling, or bootlegging were still hard to come by—they had to possess a certain skill. Jefferson's hook was his blindness. Like the novelty of a blind street musician, a blind wrestler merged entertainment with bloodsport and afforded him a side job others would not have even been considered for. Jefferson may have simply been taking a job where a job was possible, but his blindness allowed access where others were overlooked. These types of jobs were not only potential areas for disenfranchised African Americans to work, but were often the only jobs open to disabled Americans. And a steady job was a sign of respectability.

One sign of respectability, particularly among African Americans, and perhaps more so, the disabled, was clothing. Once Jefferson considered himself a successful musician, he sought out Deep Ellum's finest couturier, Model Tailors. According to Isaac

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[26] Lawson, 17.

[27] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 73.

Goldstein, son of the owner of Model Tailors, "They [Deep Ellum customers] had to have...good slides...a good hat and a Model Tailors suit."[28] So, in the spring of 1925, when record salesman R.T. Ashford sent Chicago's Paramount Records talent scout J. Mayo Williams a copy of a scratchy Blind Lemon recording, Jefferson's career as a professional musician began; the first thing he did was head to Model Tailors.

It was Jefferson's immediate popularity in Chicago, as well as the OKeh Records Artists' Night, that captured the nascent popularity of guitar-driven blues in northern cities, thereby obliterating the myth that the blues was rural. Music culture was fluid, moving north and south with the various waves of migrants. Likewise, Levine perpetuates such a myth, writing that the "hybrid blues of the female Classic Blues singers were supplemented by the more traditional sounds of a steady stream of bluesmen whose regional styles were given wide exposure for the first time."[29] Of the two known Jefferson photographs he is wearing a suit and tie in both—common stock photos of blues recording artists.

Musician Victoria Spivey may agree, stating the suit and tie was the way Jefferson usually carried himself. Jefferson and his contemporaries were songsters, meaning they played what the audience wanted to hear, whether moaning to a slide-guitar, plucking along to a classic ragtime tune, or accompanying a female vocalist complete with a horn section. Spivey recalls that together they "got so good that the landladies would try to

[28] Uzzel, 29.

[29] Levine, 228.

hire both of us at the same time. We did it when we could and loved it."[30] By the time of the golden age of blues, Jefferson, among hundreds of others, traveled back and forth from sultry juke-joints in the South to the windy back alleys of Chicago performing for sizable audiences in northern cities and southern towns alike playing popular songs to pay the bills. Once again, it was Jefferson's ability to perform in the best places that allowed him to pay the bills. Jefferson then took these talents to Paramount Records.

Chicago

By the winter of 1925 Jefferson had left a muddy Dallas for a snowy Chicago. In Chicago he was the "first downhome blues singer to enjoy commercial success." For Paramount Records, he marked the future success of the segregated race records genre. For Jefferson, this move was the beginning of his career and the end of his life. Jefferson legitimized the country blues in the northern cities, thereby shattering the myth of regional music divisions. It was the routes of music that mattered more than the roots of music. Even after this migration, folklorist John Lomax scoured the rural South in search of authentic Black folk music. There was no such thing. Everybody in Chicago listened to the country blues; Jefferson was just the first to make money for the recording industry.

At the turn of the 20th century Chicago was the fastest growing city in the United States. Much of this growth was created by African Americans moving north for employment. In 1860 fewer than eight percent of African Americans lived outside of the

[30] Daphne Duval Harrison, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 95.

South; by 1930 the number had risen to twenty-two percent.[31] Yet, while employment may have been a major factor, Black people were fleeing the South to escape a variety of factors. The next great wave of Black migrants more than doubled the population of Chicago. Industrial jobs were the catalyst for men during WWI. The prevalence of Jim Crow in every aspect of their lives may have been the ultimate motivation to move north after the Great War. One advocate for migration was the city's leading Black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*. The circulation of the *Defender* was evidence of this growth. It reached only a few thousand in 1910, but 282,571 by 1920. Between 1916 and 1920, the Black population of Chicago more than doubled to 109,000.[32] Jefferson's song "Broke and Hungry" captures why all these people were moving north and looking for an entirely new life:

> I'm broke and hungry,
> Ragged and dirty too.
> I said I'm broke and hungry,
> Ragged and dirty too.
> Mama, if I clean up,
> Can I go home with you?

These new residents were looking for entertainment after the stress of a long move and a new environment. The country blues was both a comfort to new residents and a hope for a better future. This dual effect can be seen in Jefferson himself, who held onto the memory of a Southern home and yearned for the beginning of a fresh start. Jefferson's

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[31] Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *To Ask for an Equal Chance: African Americans in the Great Depression* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 8.

[32] William Barlow, *Looking Up at Down: The Emergence of Blues Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 288-289.

lyrics capture both the prospect of a good job in the North, as well as the nostalgia for his Southern hometown. In Jefferson's "Rambler Blues" he shows how migrating north was not an easy choice, nor was it without heartache. Many migrants left loved ones behind and longed to be back down south with them again. Yet, Jefferson also shows how necessity drove many African Americans north in search of better opportunities and lifestyles, as he sings about someone he left behind as not "free." The song conveys how sometimes one must leave the past behind for a better future, even if that means the loss of home and loved ones:

> When I left my home, I left my baby cryin'
> She keeps me worried and bothered in the mind.
> Now, don't your house look lonesome, when your baby
> Pack up and leave
> Now, don't your house look lonesome, when your baby
> Pack up and leave
> You may drink your moonshine, but, baby, your heart
> Ain't free.

One related theme that is synonymous with the blind blues musician is that of the itinerant wanderer in the image of riding the rail or hiking the gravel roads. Along those roads and depots the wanderer finds the crossroads. While freedom of movement was one of the few autonomous choices African Americans could make, this decision came with consequences. Picking up one's entire life to move hundreds of miles across the country was a significant life choice, and the crossroads represented a place of decision making. It is the itinerant wanderer that most often comes to these crossroads with little direction, a few cents, and fingers full of musical talent, hoping to find a new path to follow. Since the motif of the crossroads symbolizes difficult life decisions, it is only fitting that the traveling blues musician would adopt the theme while spending much of his life

on the road. Musician Mance Lipscomb explains just this concept, as Blind Lemon "hung out round on the track, down on Deep Ellum...from nine-thirty until six o'clock that evening. Then it gittin dawk an he git somebody to carry im home."[33] Life on the road meant living on the road. It became home to the blues musician. It was Jefferson's ability to navigate the environment, or his eco-ability, that provided opportunities.

The road and its intersections held a power for blues musicians. Jefferson paints a picture of escape, love, and happiness in his "Shuckin' Sugar Blues:"

> I've got your picture, and I'm going to put it in a frame
> I've got your picture, I'll put it in a frame, Shuckin' Sugar
> And then if you leave town, we can find you just the same.

In "Sunshine Special" his attitude seems much less optimistic:

> Gonna leave on the Sunshine Special, goin' in on the Santé Fe.
> Don't say nothin' about that Katy, because it's taken my brown from me.

The road held both its positive vibes as well as its downsides. The road is free, but with freedom comes choice and many choices lead down paths unforeseen. It is only once the crossroads have been reached that the decision is put to the test. Jefferson's lyrics painted a picture of African Americans moving north, along with the emotions and decisions facing this migration. The crossroads are a recurring theme in Black tradition, representing not only the past and decisions about the future, but also the frightful days of the Middle Passage, to the Underground Railroad and the days of slavery, to Reconstruction-era Western migrations. The traveling musician represents these hard choices. Traveling the rail and the road, these musicians were crossing borders.

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[33] Govenar, "Blind Lemon Jefferson." 10.

In the early 20th century these musicians may not have been running from slave drivers, but they were running from something similar. They were running from sharecropping, from plantations, and from the lack of jobs and racism in the South. The idea of making a living playing music, rather than toiling in the fields, must have held quite an allure. For the first time in their lives these musicians were free to make their own decisions. The road was not simply a ticket out of the past, but also, possibly for the first time, a chance to make their own judgments and decisions.

Jefferson, though, already had a promising job in 1925 in commercial music. His success recording the country blues with Paramount Records became the model for record companies. That spring, Paramount Records, along with a number of other recording companies, "sent portable field equipment to southern cities or invited southern singers to their home studios in the North."[34] While the classic blues of Bessie Smith was already immensely popular, they relied on professional songwriters and jazz accompaniments. This kind of production cost money and required a variety of musicians. Country blues, on the other hand, could be recorded outside a singer's home or right on the street, even in prisons where Lomax "discovered" Lead Belly. The country blues were easy to record, and Jefferson was more than willing to participate.

Jefferson recorded seventy-nine singles for Paramount Records from 1925 to 1929. Songs like "Dry Southern Blues," "Corinna Blues," and "Long Lonesome Blues" were hits that were covered by his contemporaries. "Wartime Blues" and "Broke and Hungry" commented on social issues. "Matchbook Blues" and "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean"

[34] Uzzel, 31.

made Jefferson a modern classic. "Wartime Blues" presents a unique perspective of being blind during an international conflict by showing both the heartache of deployment and the emasculation of the inability to serve in the war because of a disability.

> What you gonna do when they send your man to the war?
> What you gonna do, send your man to the war?
> What you gonna do when they send your man to the war?
> I'm gonna drink muddy water, gonna sleep in a hollow log.
>
> Ain't got nobody, I'm all here by myself
> Got nobody, all here by myself
> Got nobody, all here by myself
> Well, these women don't care but the men don't need me here.

Between recording sessions at Paramount, Jefferson was popular in the Black Chicago communities. He performed on the streets, on the "L," and was hired to play in nightclubs and private socials. While Oliver declares the Paramount recordings of Jefferson as a "remarkable series of recordings which preserve the blues in its folk form at the point of transition from the field holler to the street corner and the barroom floor," Jefferson was simply recording what Paramount wanted to hear, the downhome blues. In the nightclubs he performed ragtime or reworked his own blues songs to fit the popular dances of 1920s Chicago, just as he did in the dusty barrooms of Deep Ellum. Just as he moved north to south, so too did the styles of blues music.

Paramount Records' publication of the *Paramount Book of Blues* used the stereotypical colonial image of the country blues as southern African Americans "singing weird, sad melodies at their work and play, and unconsciously he [Jefferson] began to imitate them—lamenting his fate in song," and Jefferson's blindness was a "heart-rending fate." Here, the oppressed plight of both African Americans and the disabled are

combined by Paramount Records to create the ultimate image of destitution. But, it also maintained the myth of the blues. Music scholar Jeff Todd Titon believes the insincere depictions of African Americans in race record advertisements were maintained because record labels were comfortable with illustrations of "downhome black people."[35] It is more likely though that White store owners selling race records were more comfortable with the image of downhome African Americans. Even the *Chicago Defender* expressed Jefferson's music was "real old-fashioned blues by a real old-fashioned blues singer [who] plays the guitar in a real southern style."[36] The image of a disabled *and* downhome African American did not frighten White listeners and advertised nostalgia for Black listeners. White listeners were also drawn to this nostalgia. Paramount Records and the *Defender* knew this performance was all a farce. Jefferson knew it was all a farce. The artist Blind Lemon Jefferson, though, made it part of his act. And his records sold.

Scholars have since unpacked the racist stereotypes used in popular cultural forms in the history of the country. Some have shown how the oppressed artists used such stereotypes to achieve social gain. Titon writes that the advertising illustrations of downhome blues songs placed "the plantation stereotype more firmly...As for the city black, he was invited, by the jive talk, to laugh at his country cousin." He continues, stating the listener was "supposed to laugh at the predicament of the character whose troubles he sang about."[37] Jefferson illustrated another archetype of the oppressed, the

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[35] Jeff Todd Titon, *Early Downhome Blues: A Musical and Cultural Analysis* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 204.
[36] Uzzel, 38.
[37] Titon, 254.

disabled. He merged both forms, or at least abided by the decisions of Paramount Records, to advertise both his race and disability. What is more, these advertisements were intended for both urban and rural consumers, in the North or South, through local retailers. Therefore, the notion that the blues was southern, or rural, was also part of the advertisement that Jefferson portrayed. Jefferson, though, used eco-ability to navigate race and disability to achieve a modicum of musical success.

Conclusion

By 1929 the *Chicago Defender* had labeled Jefferson the King of the Country Blues. Only a couple months after the Stock Market Crash that would also mark the end of the race record genre and nearly the recording industry altogether, Jefferson disappeared into a Chicago snowstorm and never returned. In December, Jefferson's life came to a sudden end. Just like his life, his death is shrouded in myth. The details of his death have long been debated, although most accounts agree he died on the South Side streets of Chicago in December 1929. Jazz historian John Steiner said Jefferson left Paramount studios in the late afternoon to play at a house party and was found dead in the street early the next morning, "with snow drifting over his body." His producer, Arthur Laibly, believed he had a heart attack while waiting on his driver. But this cause suggests his driver either left him behind or never came to pick him up. Jefferson's old manager, Mayo Williams, claims the singer "collapsed in his car and was abandoned by his chauffeur." Some argue Jefferson died from more nefarious means. Mance Lipscomb argues he was beaten, robbed, and left to die in the street, while Mattie Dancer states she heard he was

shot during a performance. Others suggest he had simply left the house party and got lost in the streets during the blizzard. the *Chicago Defender* proclaimed it was "Chicago's worst snowstorm" in a series of particularly snowy weather in the windy city that winter.[38] Some, like Son House and Charley Patton, claim even to have played with him years after his death.[39]

Paramount Records sent Jefferson's body back to Texas, where he was buried in the frozen ground on New Year's Day, 1930, at Smith Chapel Primitive Baptist Church No. 1: "Two or three hundred people came to the funeral, black and white, to watch his coffin lowered into the ground." In March, blues singer John Byrd recorded a single titled "Wasn't It Sad About Lemon." The flip-side of this record was a sermon by Rev. Emmett Dickinson entitled "Death of Blind Lemon."[40]

What makes one look past Jefferson's ability and ingenuity is an oft-repeated aspect, often associated with blues singers: blindness. Like the story of soul-selling in exchange for musical talent, the same is true with blindness. The lack of sight that Jefferson had to live with is often associated with his supreme musical abilities, "the blind genius, doomed and gifted by fate to trade his eye-sight in return for his artistic talent."[41] The image of a blind blues player sitting in a train depot with a steel guitar on his lap singing songs about the rough life on the road is a staple of blues iconography, but more

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[38] "Four Dead in Chicago's Worst Snowstorm," *The Chicago Defender*, March 29, 1930, 1.
[39] Uzzel, 45-46.
[40] Uzzel, 47.

[41] Joseph Witek, "Blindness as Rhetorical Trope in Blues Discourse," *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2. (1988), 178.

so, it was a paying job, and it was just as rewarding as playing in local juke joints, to the point that Jefferson may have played along the street or the train tracks more than he did indoors. For listeners, Jefferson's use of his various environments allowed him a modicum of financial success, rare for Americans oppressed by both their race and physical impairments. The eco-ability of blind blues musicians gave some of them a way out of blind institutions and pauperism. Blind Lemon Jefferson played the blues. He traveled like a bluesman, and he was blind. But, more than any of those things, he played the blues with such remarkable talent that he became one of the first successful blues artists.

Discussion Questions:

1. What was the role of Jefferson's blindness to his musical career? What does the author mean by eco-ability and complex embodiment?
2. What was attracted African American musicians to the Blues? What accounts for the success of men like Blind Lemon Jefferson among both Black and White audiences?
3. What were Race Records? Why was this title used?
4. What is the legacy of music from the early 20th century? Are there any connections between Jefferson's story and the Blues and contemporary music today?

Writing Prompt:

Research another Blues artist from the 1920s and compare/contrast their life and song lyrics to that of Blind Lemon Jefferson.

CHAPTER 10

Fire on the Hill: The 2nd Ranger Infantry Company, Integration, and the African American Military Experience

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INTRODUCTION

"Put some fire on the hills!" yelled Sgt. James Freeman to his men. David "Tank" Clarke began firing his BAR machine gun at the waves of approaching North Korean soldiers. Clarke, Freeman, and the rest of the 2nd Ranger Infantry Company were at the front of the U.S. lines in North Korea in January 1951. Surrounded and outgunned by the North Korean and Chinese armies in front of them, Clarke and the others retreated under fire, losing several men. The "Buffalo Rangers," as they referred to themselves, were attached to a large conventional unit and utilized as a stopgap during the massive U.S. retreat.[1] As the only segregated unit in the area and the first and only all-Black Special Forces unit in U.S. history, the 2nd Ranger Infantry Company represents a unique moment in the African American military experience, highlighting both the past of Black military service as well as progress leading both African Americans and the U.S. military forward. With the Buffalo Rangers as a unique end point, the entire corpus of African American military service illustrates a timeline of stunted progress, racial discrimination, and moments of success and recognition. African Americans have served in military conflicts dating back to colonial times, and evidence of Black soldiers is prevalent in early conflicts like the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Starting with the U.S. Civil War, an in-depth

[1] "Command Report of the 32nd Infantry Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division for the Period of 1 to 31 January 1951." Records of the Historical Services Division; Records of the Office of the Chief of Military History; Records of the Army Staff; Record Group 319; National Archives, College Park, Maryland. Hereafter referred to as *NARA.*

examination of African American military experience offers an additional narrative in the greater Black Freedom Struggle.

THE CIVIL WAR

March 1863 saw the U.S. Civil War entering its second full year, and with the release of the Emancipation Proclamation just a few months prior, the war was given a new foundation and cause. A simple and powerful argument put forth by Frederick Douglass captures the gravity of African American service in the war to end slavery: "A war undertaken and brazenly carried for the perpetual enslavement of the colored men, calls logically and loudly for the colored men to help suppress it." Standing proud in Rochester, New York, Douglass delivered a thunderous challenge to free Blacks in the North: "Who would be free themselves must strike the blow."[2] Referring to the recent decision to recruit, arm, and employ African American soldiers in the ongoing Civil War, Douglass made an impassioned call to arms. African Americans were called to stand and fight in the very conflict that was defining their humanity and place in U.S. society.

Abraham Lincoln's issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863 ended slavery in the United States, at least in rhetoric and purpose, and re-defined the Civil War with one clear and uninterrupted purpose.[3] Shortly after, the U.S. military looked to harness that new purpose and a yet untapped reserve of manpower: free African Americans living in the Northern states. With the issue of General Orders No. 143, the

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[2] Douglass, Frederick. "Men of Color, to Arms!" Rochester, NY: March 21, 1863. Frederick Douglass Project, University of Rochester. http://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4372.

[3] Following the Union "victory" at Antietam in September 1862 and the passing of the Union Army confiscation acts throughout 1862, Lincoln issued the proclamation on January 1, 1863. The proclamation ended slavery in 10 Southern states, but because of their open state of rebellion the announcement had little tangible effect outside the ideological implications. Until this point in the war, the Union had not unequivocally argued that the war was to end slavery. For further reading on the Emancipation and Lincoln, see: Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012).

United States Army established the Bureau of Colored Troops, further sparking recruitment and training of African American soldiers. Eventually numbering close to 200,000 in strength and making up 10 percent of Union forces, the inclusion of Black troops in the Union Army proved crucial as the war began to shift towards a Union victory.

U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) Regiments served in segregated units and were almost unanimously led by White officers. Initially paid less than their White counterparts, these new units took on all manner of military jobs. USCT regiments served in infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineering roles and represented every state of the Union by the end of the war. On top of limited advancement opportunities, African American regiments were routinely tasked with forming the center of frontal assaults and other highly dangerous jobs. Fighting against a perceived lack of combat ability by their White counterparts and military commanders, the USCT regiments time and time again proved their worth in battles like Port Hudson, Fort Wagner, Fort Pillow, and Chaffin's Farm as the war pushed to a close. In addition to the dangerous positions on the battlefield, these men faced further peril in the prospect of capture. Confederate soldiers and officers routinely did not extend the rights of prisoners to surrendering African American soldiers. Infamously at the Battle of the Crater in July 1864, Confederate soldiers bayoneted and shot Black soldiers who had already surrendered.[4]

Easily the most famous example of USCT regiments in action is the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Serving from March 1863 to the end of the war, these men represented the first official African American regiment in the Union Army. Supported by the governor, Frederick Douglass, and the stout abolitionist community of Boston, the 54th received more potential recruits than it actually needed. Led by a White abolitionist officer, Robert Gould Shaw, these men served as inspiration for other forming units. Participating in the Battle at Fort Wagner in July 1863, the 54th furthered its image by bravely storming stout Confederate defensive works at the center of the fray. One young man, William Carney, would eventually be awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in

[4] John F. Schmutz, *The Battle of the Crater: A Complete History* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland Press, 2009), 255-257.

heroically carrying the American flag over the ramparts in what would end in a losing effort. While fighting the Confederates, these men also fought for themselves, securing equal pay a full year after their enlistment. At the Battle of Olustee, the men famously chanted "Massachusetts and Seven Dollars a Month!" in reference to their receiving only half of what their White counterparts received. Through protest on their behalf and Congressional action, the men of the 54th were compensated for the pay disparity in September 1864.[5]

As the Civil War came to a close in April 1865 and the U.S. turned to Reconstruction, African Americans had played a varying and visible role in the conflict. Outside of the Union regiments, many African Americans toiled exhaustively in the manual labor jobs that supported Union forces in the field. As armies moved through the Confederacy, many of the slaves that were emancipated attached themselves and helped however they could. On the other side of the conflict, Confederate states utilized slave labor in a great variety of roles in support of the war effort. Several prominent Confederate leaders even argued for the arming of slaves near the end of the war, a plan that was put into motion in the final days of the war. From traditional agricultural roles to unique tasks such as hospital attendants and even soldiers, the Confederate war time labor force reflected the society from which it sprang.[6]

THE FRONTIER AND IMPERIALISM

[5] The 54th Massachusetts served with distinction until the end of the war in April 1865, fighting effectively in both offensive and defensive operations. The legacy of the 54th served as a massive point of pride for the African American community in the North during the post-war era, being memorialized in a famous monument on the Boston Commons in the 1880s. For further reading on the 54th Mass., see: Sarah Greenough and Nancy K. Anderson, *Tell it with Pride: The 54th Massachusetts Regiment and Augustus Saint-Gaudens' Shaw Memorial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).
[6] Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation: Southern Plans to Free and Arm Slaves during the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

As the United States moved on from the Civil War and faced industrialization, the closing of the frontier, and its first forays into imperialism, African American soldiers remained visible yet segregated elements of American military excursions. Transitioning into the relative peacetime following the war, several African American regiments shifted towards frontier duty. Supposedly nicknamed the "Buffalo Soldiers" by the Comanche in 1871 for their toughness in combat and their tight Black curly hair, these men fought on horseback, guarded mail shipments, and even built roads across the American West. During this period African American soldiers pushed for further inclusion in U.S. military institutions and for equal treatment by their peers. In 1877 a young former slave became the first African American to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Henry Flipper was commissioned as a lieutenant and served in one of the Buffalo Soldier cavalry units on the frontier. Facing discriminatory treatment at West Point as well as during his command on the frontier, Flipper built a positive reputation as a competent officer with those around him. His career was upended when a racist officer at Fort Davis framed Flipper for embezzling money. [7]

The Buffalo Soldiers pressed on in their service as the United States entered the world stage at the end of the nineteenth century. The U.S. frontier closed in 1890, largely ending the country's tradition of expansion, settlement, and conflict with natives that had come to define the national culture and character since the early colonial period. As this transition occurred, the U.S. focus turned outward to the world. With the annexation of Hawaii and other strategic locations around the world, the United States entered into an imperial phase. No event is more important in this conversation than the Spanish American War in 1898. Fought under the auspices of freeing the Cuban people from tyrannical Spanish rule, this conflict firmly places the U.S. on the world stage. As American

[7] For further reading on the Buffalo Soldiers see Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles, *Buffalo Soldiers in the West: A Black Soldiers Anthology* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007); Frank N. Schubert, *Voices of the Buffalo Soldier: Records, Reports, and Recollections of Military Life and Service in the West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

military forces ventured to foreign lands on "civilizing missions," the racial division of American society continued its rampant and hypocritical display in its armed forces.[8]

In both the Spanish American War (1898-1899) and the ensuing Philippine American War (1899-1902), African Americans served in segregated units alongside their White counterparts. A large number of these units mustered into existence under the formation of the American Volunteer Army. This force was raised as the war with Spain was coming into focus, in an attempt to augment the size of the small American professional army of the time. Perhaps most infamous among the African American regiments of the war were the so-called "Immunes." Recruited specifically from Southern states, these units and their men were hand-picked for service in the climate of Cuba for their perceived resistance to tropical illnesses. Pushed by Black leaders like Booker T. Washington, the idea that African American men were resistant to Yellow Fever led to the creation of ten such "immune" infantry regiments for the war effort. In a stark departure from army doctrines of the past, a large number of the lower level officers would be African American.[9]

In the field African American regiments served with distinction, earning numerous accolades and awards. In perhaps the most famous battle of the war in Cuba at San Juan Hill, African American soldiers played a central yet largely unknown part in the significant American victory. Fighting alongside Teddy Roosevelt's "Rough Riders," a specially recruited and independent cavalry unit, soldiers of several African American units formed the core of the main attack up the hill. Seen largely as the climactic victory of the war, Roosevelt's part receives the lion's share of the press and discussion concerning San Juan Hill.[10] During the conflict, both in Cuba and stateside, African American regiments faced

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[8] For further reading on America's entrance into Imperialism see Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[9] Roger D. Cunningham, *The Black "Immune" Regiments in the Spanish-American War.* Army Historical Foundation. 2015.

[10] Contemporary sources focused solely on the accounts of Roosevelt and his men, in particular a famous article series in *Scribner's* magazine. Theodore Roosevelt, "The Rough Riders" *Scribner's*, Vol. 25, January-June 1899, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899).

racist and discriminatory treatment from civilians and White military forces. While training and recruiting for an Immunes regiment in Macon, Georgia, several bouts of violence occurred when the community refused to lift Jim Crow segregation laws for the men in uniform. The prevalent mistreatment boiled over time and time again, creating visible public riots and fights. Nowhere was this more prevalent than in the country's next conflict in the Philippines.

Following the conclusion of the war with Spain, the United States moved to consolidate control over former Spanish colonial holdings like the Philippines. Filipino soldiers who had recently helped the United States defeat the Spanish in the Philippines immediately resisted U.S. control, igniting the Philippine American War. A harsh war of guerrilla ambushes and counterinsurgency tactics, the war in the Philippines was much more violent and destructive than the one in Cuba had ever been. Several African American regiments arrived in the area to help suppress the so-called "Filipino Insurrection," one of which was the 24th Infantry Regiment. As one of the earliest Buffalo Soldier units, the 24th had a long history of serving as a segregated unit. Through the war in Cuba and now in the Philippines, these men faced racial slurs and discriminatory treatment every day. In the Philippines, the men of the 24th witnessed the Filipino people endure similar racial discrimination and harsh treatment for defending their independence. Facing the prospect of squashing that rebellion as a "civilizing mission" did not sit well with many men of the 24th. Chief among them was David Fagen, who eventually disagreed so thoroughly that he deserted the U.S. Army and began fighting alongside the Filipinos.

David Fagen and six other African American soldiers left the U.S. military during the conflict and joined the Filipino resistance. Neither Black soldiers nor Black community leaders at home agreed with subjugating another race of people. Racial slurs commonly used against African Americans were commonly used against the Filipino *insurectos*, a notion that highlighted the still pervasive issues facing a segregated American military. Labelled a traitor for his actions in fighting against the U.S., Fagen reached such a high

profile that a bounty was placed upon his head.[11] Fagen, his fellow deserters, and other African Americans serving in the Philippines fought against and in a segregated military that valued their lives and skills at a lower level than White soldiers. As the twentieth century dawned, the American military and the society it represented had a long way to go.

THE WORLD WARS

As the world plunged into the First World War in the summer of 1914, the United States prepared to hold itself and its people out of the fray. Following years of isolationism and growing tensions, the United States finally joined the war alongside England and France in 1917. As the American Expeditionary Force prepared for war, once again the nation would fight as a segregated force. Unlike former conflicts, during the 1910s race relations in the U.S. forced African Americans wishing to serve their country backwards. American military and social thought of the period deemed African Americans unworthy of combat roles, and instead pushed Black soldiers into menial labor and support jobs.

The major exception to the norm was the 369th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard. More commonly referred to as the "Harlem Hellfighters," this group of soldiers sparked a movement back in the States. Facing discrimination and segregation during training and transport to Europe, the 369th was continually threatened with losing their combat status. Once in Europe, the U.S. Army continued to push its systematic, divisive, and discriminatory behavior, releasing a pamphlet warning French civilians about the "dangers" of the Black soldier. The men were eventually assigned to a French Army

[11] The fate of David Fagen is still up for debate. His bounty was claimed using a decomposing body found in the Philippines, but rumors abound that he survived the war and lived out his life peacefully. For further reading on David Fagen's life and African Americans in the Philippine conflict see *The Philippine War—A Conflict of Conscience for African Americans.* National Park Service. https://www.nps.gov/prsf/learn/historyculture/the-philippine-insurrectiothe-philippine-war-a-conflict-of-consciencen-a-war-of-controversy.htm, last accessed 2/20/2018.

as American generals refused to send White soldiers to fight under another nation's flag and command.

Wearing American uniforms, French helmets, and utilizing French weapons, the men of the 369th served under French leadership for the totality of their combat experience. Facing no discrimination or segregation, the men took part in numerous famous battles of the war's final months, including the second battle of the Marne and the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Several of the Hellfighters were recognized for their service both during the war and in the years following. Private Henry Johnson was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously decades later for an infamous moment in which he and one other man prevented a German raid numbering more than twenty men with little more than their rifles and a bolo knife. The entire regiment received a citation from the French military and over 170 individuals earned the *Croix de Guerre*, a French recognition of valor. [12]

The men of the 369th Infantry returned home emboldened by their service and sacrifice on the world's stage. The new image and attitude of these men served as a foundation for the blossoming Harlem Renaissance. A period of unprecedented economic and educational growth among the African American community in cities like New York and Chicago, the moment pushed the Black community fully out of the shadow of slavery and saw the emergence of the "New Negro," an image of cosmopolitan sophistication and artistic achievement. Nowhere is that more expressed than in the works of the movement itself. Poems like Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" and W.E.B. DuBois' "Returning Soldiers" reference the fighting spirit of the Harlem Hellfighters and the need to continue to fight against injustice and discrimination at home.[13]

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[12] The Harlem Hellfighters enjoy a rich historiography that is growing each year as this pivotal unit is highlighted. For further reading on the 369th see Arthur Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: African American Troops in World War I* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974); Jeffrey Sammons and John Morrow, *Harlem's Rattlers and the Great War: The Undaunted 369th Regiment and the African American Quest for Equality* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2014).

[13] Nathan Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

As the military mobilized in the years leading up to the Second World War, the conversation about African Americans in the military garnered serious thought and planning. Wanting to avoid the issues of discrimination and disproportionate representation from the First World War, planners looked to build a balanced and more representative military that included African Americans in all arenas of service.[14] Progress was achieved in special cases, but for the vast majority of African Americans serving in the war, familiar issues of limited opportunity and racial discrimination remained prevalent. The vast majority of African Americans that served their country in World War II did so in non-combat and support roles. Most men worked as cooks, janitors, truck drivers, or stevedores. Four African American women joined the war effort, serving as nurses in the U.S. Navy. Phyllis Mae Dailey became the first African American woman to serve in March 1945.

A select number of African Americans served in combat roles during World War II despite rampant racist sentiments among U.S. major and general grade leadership. The most famous example of African American combat experience lies with the Tuskegee Airmen. Officially the 332nd Fighter Group of the U.S. Army Air Corps, the Tuskegee Airmen represent the first African American aviators in American military history. Named for the distinctive red tails of their aircraft, these men flew escort missions with U.S. bombers over the Mediterranean and mainland Europe. In contrast to the well-known Tuskegees, the relatively unknown 452nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion served as an all-African American unit in every Allied land campaign in Europe.

One of the seldom highlighted examples of African American combat units during World War II is the 761st Tank Battalion. Raised in 1942, the 761st faced discrimination and continuous obstacles before seeing any combat. During their unusually long training cycle, which lasted nearly two years, the men of the "Black Panthers" were harassed and goaded into racially fueled fights with White enlisted men and military police.[15] The most

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[14] Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History U.S. Army, 1966), p. 49-50.

[15] According to U.S. Army records and studies, the U.S. Army believed that due to inherent combat abilities and educational standards, it was necessary to extend training

famous of the early tankers was Jackie Robinson, who went on to integrate major league baseball but also faced severe hardship and near court-martial for refusing to give up a seat on a bus. Upon receiving a superior rating, the men were shipped to England and joined General George Patton's 3rd Army upon direct request. Patton's perception of the men and the unit at large reflected a great deal of opinions held among American generals. The general never fully accepted the combat abilities of African American soldiers, even though he utilized the 761st extensively in the last seven months of the war. While admiring their "toughness and courage" in combat, Patton kept a hard ceiling on his appraisal of African American soldiers.[16] Despite discrimination and racialized hardship, the men of the 761st demonstrated their outstanding abilities in combat, earning 296 purple hearts, eleven silver stars, one Medal of Honor, and a presidential unit citation, while taking part in the Battle of the Bulge and the breaking of the Siegfried Line.[17]

INTEGRATION AND RESISTANCE

In 1942 an African American newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, put a name to the energized movement for progress rising within Black America: Double Victory. Inspired by a young reader, the slogan became synonymous with the struggles surrounding African Americans and their service during the war. James Thompson asked the paper in a letter why he should sacrifice his safety for a nation that only allowed him to live "Half

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for African American units by up to 100%. This resulted in the 761st training being extended an entire year longer than their White counterparts. Bell I. Wiley, "The Training of Negro Troops" (War Department Special Staff, Historical Division. Historical Section, Army Ground Forces: 1946), p. 56.

[16] Despite a rousing and proto-typical speech from Patton upon the arrival of the 761st in Europe, the general was much more bigoted in private. Arguing that African American soldiers could not "think fast enough to fight in armor," Patton's true feelings were much more closely aligned with the prevailing attitudes of the day in the U.S. military. Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (Norwalk, CT: Easton Press, 1999), p. 172.

[17] Both the Medal of Honor (Staff Sergeant Ruben Rivers) and Presidential citations were awarded much later, in 1997 and 1978, respectively. For further information on the 761st, see Charles W. Sasser, *Patton's Panthers: The African American 761st Tank Battalion in World War II* (New York: Pocket Books, 2004).

American." The resulting slogan and campaign argued that Black service in the war had two visions of victory: one over fascism abroad and the other over discrimination and injustice at home. As the war raged on and African American soldiers fought in tanks, planes, and everywhere in-between, the broader community looked to build upon their sacrifice. A reckoning was coming in U.S. race relations, and Black military service in World War II served as the springboard.[18]

Starting well before the outbreak of the war, African American organizations pressed for progress in the U.S. Groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons (NAACP), National Urban League (NUL), the National Negro Congress (NNC), and others fought against racial injustices and systematic segregation. Both of the World Wars served as catalysts for change as the U.S. population was tasked with supporting massive war efforts. During the Second World War this was more necessary than any other point in American history as some sixteen million Americans would eventually leave the civilian workforce for military service. African American men and women rushed to fill these empty jobs. Changes like this brought on new societal tensions and issues to be addressed. As White and Black Americans came into increasingly close contact working in the defense industry, racialized violence erupted across the nation. Civil rights leaders like A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin proved instrumental in these years, organizing labor unions and eliciting public pressure for anti-discrimination practices. From 1941 to 1946 these men and dozens more created the "March on Washington Movement," calling for tens of thousands of African Americans to march on the nation's capital in support of an integrated military and fair employment practices.[19] The U.S. government made provisional decisions to safeguard these new workers' equality and access to jobs. Executive Order 8802 and the creation of the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) in 1941 guaranteed wages and job access against discriminatory practices in war-related industries. These issues were taken up by

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[18] Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 2001), 19-23.
[19] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: The March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

African American organizations and as the war was coming to an end, pressure mounted for progress in post-war America.[20]

Harry Truman became the 33rd president of the United States in April 1945 following the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Facing the inexperienced Truman in office was closing out the war in both Europe and the Pacific, crafting the post-war world and alliances, and securing permanent progress for African Americans. Truman briefly served as a senator in Missouri prior to his placement on the 1944 presidential ticket as FDR's vice-president and had a tumultuous voting record on Civil Rights issues. With African Americans working in the factories and serving on the battlefields and increasingly becoming an instrumental voting bloc within the Democratic Party, Truman lay in a unique position to implement a sweeping change to the country's racial dynamic.

During the same month that Truman became president, a landmark event took place in Indiana. At the domestic home of the Tuskegee Airmen in Seymour, the commanding officers of Freeman Field constructed a Whites-only officers' club. This was in direct violation of several Army regulations and directives that disallowed separating such facilities. African American officers of the 477th Medium Bombardment Group attempted to utilize the club on numerous occasions, resulting in multiple nights of arrests. When asked to sign a petition by the White commanding officer allowing the separate facilities, 101 men of the 477th refused. The "Freeman 101" became nationally known, and their fate pulled the attention of the Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, who very publicly called for the release of all the men. Outside one officer being fined, the incident was a massive victory for African Americans in the military. Many historians point to this moment as the catalyst for further and more dramatic progress on the issues.[21]

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[20] Takaki, p. 25-38.

[21] One of the most important volumes on the subject of discrimination and post-war integration is Jon Taylor's *Freedom to Serve.* Picking the story up in the mid-1930s, this work discusses the war, the home front, and all of the political dealings leading up to African American integration in 1948. Jon Taylor, *Freedom to Serve: Truman, Civil Rights, and Executive Order 9981.* (London, Routledge, 2013).

Momentum built quickly in the year 1945 as the world prepped to rebuild itself once again. As groups like the NAACP pushed for progress nationally and internationally, the U.S. Army retreated behind closed doors to evaluate its stance and the future of racial segregation. The War Department's Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policy served as the principal forum for such discussions. During an initial study, the toxic race relationship within the U.S. Army was laid bare. In a July 1945 report on White officers' opinions on Black effectiveness during combat, two wildly different viewpoints emerged. Higher echelon officers argued that Black soldiers were lazy and lacked purpose in combat, largely attributing this lack of ability to social and racial foundations. Lower echelon officers argued that Black soldiers underperformed due to racist behavior from the higher ranks and the limited arena for promotion and opportunity for Black soldiers in the military. Segregation itself arose as the one constant, and the committee's report recommended the gradual integration of the military as the logical solution.[22]

With both societal pressures and logical arguments coming from within the Army about using every available soldier, the case for gradual integration built over the ensuing years. President Truman became increasingly public about Civil Rights issues and his intentions to guarantee U.S. citizens their rights. American society continued through bitter divisiveness, with organizations like the NAACP pushing for progress while many Southern politicians recycled and re-energized old tropes of racial inferiority as a defense against integration efforts in the military and civilian society. International attention grew as the U.S. position in the United Nations garnered the world's eye as issues on human rights took the floor of the new forum. Combined with a looming election in the fall, President Truman issued two Executive Orders: 9980 and 9981 in July 1948. The former guaranteed fair employment practices and the latter demanded fair and equal treatment and opportunity for the nation's armed forces.

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[22] War Department. "Opinions About Negro Infantry Platoons in White Companies of 7 Divisions," July 3, 1945. Record Group 220: Records of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, Army. Truman Presidential Library. https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/documents/index.php?documentid=10-11&pagenumber=1, last accessed 2/05/2018.

Executive Order 9981 called for "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin." The order also made possible the creation of a committee to oversee the implementation of the new directive.[23] Even though the Executive Order does not specifically mention integration, Truman made it clear in the following days that this was the intended application. Even though society was still segregated, Truman believed that the U.S. military should and would lead the way on integration and the death of segregation. As the military branches took up this new calling, there was no specific deadline outlined by Truman. The Executive Order changed nothing overnight, but provided the starting line for American military integration. It would not be until America's next conflict when integration would be put to the test.[24]

KOREA AND THE "BUFFALO RANGERS"

As the Cold War intensified in in the late 1940s between the United States and the Soviet Union, a great number of smaller nations got caught in the ideological struggle. One such nation was Korea. The Korean peninsula was set free after World War II after decades of Japanese occupation. In rebuilding the devastated nation, Korea became the site of the first proxy war of the Cold War. Divided in half between the democratic and the U.S.-allied South and the communist and Soviet-influenced North, the Korean peninsula served as a microcosm of the wider struggle between east and west. A conflict erupted in June 1950 when the communists of North Korea invaded the southern nation in attempt to unify the two countries under a communist regime. Influenced heavily by the Soviet Union and the recently established communist People's Republic of China, the North Korean military rapidly gained territory and threatened to destroy the South Korean nation in a

[23] Exec. Order No. 9981, 3 C.F.R. 2 (1948). Truman Presidential Library. https://www.trumanlibrary.org/9981.htm, last accessed July 11, 2019.
[24] Taylor. *Freedom to Serve.* 97-100.

matter of months. Less than a month after the war began, the United Nations voted to intervene on behalf of South Korea with the United States leading the way.[25]

The U.S. military called to action in 1950 was ill-prepared for war. One of the first U.S. units deployed to Korea was the 24th Infantry Regiment. Serving in Japan as an occupation force in 1950, the 24th remained a completely segregated unit. Led by White officers at the highest echelons, the all-Black unit lacked proper supplies and was not in combat shape when it arrived in Korea. The first several engagements were marked by defeat and retreats. Given the nickname the "Frightened 24th" by U.S. commanders, the men served as an example of all-American units in the opening weeks of the war. The racial lines exacerbated the treatment and perception of the 24th, and later in the war it would become apparent. Lieutenant Leon Gilbert, a ten-year army veteran who had served in World War II, was leading a severely weakened company in retreat when he was ordered on the offensive against a much larger and well-established enemy. Gilbert refused, arguing the order was basically suicide. Gilbert's White commanding officer immediately relieved him of duty and tried him for insubordination and cowardice. The subsequent court martial found Gilbert guilty and sentenced to death. The image of a beleaguered Black junior officer attempting to protect his men against insurmountable odds and a deadly order from a White officer quickly exploded at home. Massive public outcry came to the defense of Gilbert in the form of protests, petitions, and demonstrations. Gilbert's sentence was commuted to twenty years and he eventually served five. Two full years after the Executive Order for integration, the military wasted no time in demonstrating its clear lack of progress on the matter.[26]

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[25] For a comprehensive examination of the war in Korea and its foundations see Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[26] The 24th Infantry Regiment is a powerful example of the American military's opening move into Korea. Lack of command cohesion, logistical shortcomings, heavy casualties, and racial tensions massively impacted the 24th's ability to be effective in combat. William Bowers, *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea.* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1997), 120-122.

While many of the 24th Infantry and the U.S. Army's issues related to race and slow-moving integration policies, the state of the military and its capabilities in 1950 was greatly in flux. The U.S. military of the early Cold War was rapidly transitioning. American strategists and high command envisioned a military that didn't need millions of men in uniform like the recently concluded Second World War. Instead, many forward-thinking commanders envisioned a military that would win wars with strategic bombers and nuclear weapons. In such a military the required ground forces would be small in number but highly trained and capable of accomplishing numerous different tasks.[27] One such innovation was American Ranger Companies. Utilized in World War II, these small companies of specially trained individuals were supposedly capable of moving faster and farther than standard infantry units. Designed to conduct raids and lay ambushes, Ranger companies were viewed as more capable than regular soldiers. At the outset of the Korean War, the U.S. Army looked to revive this concept in order to bolster the struggling Army's capabilities. In September 1950, after a successful field test in the U.S. 8th Army, the Army Ranger School was officially established at Fort Benning, Georgia.[28]

As the Ranger Training program began, a call went out to units both at home and abroad. Pitched as the "toughest, meanest outfit in the U.S. Army" the Rangers were asking for "triple" volunteers. Eligible candidates for Ranger training were volunteers into the Army as there was no ongoing draft, volunteers for airborne and glider schools, and

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[27] For an in-depth conversation on the shifting thinking in American military planning in the Cold War see Adrian Lewis, *The American Culture of War: A History of US Military Force from World War II to Operation Enduring Freedom* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[28] The Army Rangers of World War II were largely experimental. Serving in every theater, each of the WWII Ranger units was trained and employed slightly differently. Each instance reached a differing level of "success" depending on the commander employing them and their individual ideas of what the Rangers were designed to do. No uniform directives or regulations existed and by the end of the war all of the Ranger units had been disbanded. The image of Ranger units conducting high-profile raids persisted as did the large swath of Ranger veterans as the Korean conflict erupted. It was this image that brought the Rangers back and solidified their existence with the Ranger School at Fort Benning. For a comprehensive background of the modern American rangers and their sometimes awkward road to acceptance, see David Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry? The Changing Role of the U.S. Army Rangers from Dieppe to Grenada* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1992).

finally, volunteers for combat in Korea. Specifically targeted by these calls was the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Infamous for its actions in World War II, the 82nd was one of the few remaining mainline combats units still stateside. The 82nd had a sizable representation of African American soldiers serving in segregated regiments and battalions within the division, many of which volunteered for the new opportunity. Corporal James Fields was one of the first men from the all-Black 80th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion to volunteer for Ranger School. He had a fascination with groups like Darby's Rangers and the British Commandos from World War II and desperately wanted to serve in a similar unit.[29]

African American enthusiasm was high, as 27 percent of the original 491 men to be selected for Ranger training were Black. The new school at Fort Benning was designed as an intensive six-week course focused on small unit cohesion, infiltration, and maneuverability. Physical fitness and orienteering were crucial elements of the schedule. Frequently, the men would take part in twelve, fifteen, or even 24-hour exercises. Pushing soldiers to their physical and mental limits became a calling card of Ranger training in Korea and beyond. Unlike the Rangers of World War II, the new units were organized into separate and individual companies. By mid-October four Ranger companies graduated the course and prepared for deployment. Originally organized as 107 enlisted men and five officers, each unit was attached to a conventional Infantry division once in Korea. The 2nd Ranger Infantry Company was comprised of only African American soldiers. The creation of a segregated Special Forces unit two years after the integration order demonstrates the racial leaning of the Army and the slow pace of integration efforts. During training the men of the 2nd Ranger Company endured racial slurs and had to fight

[29] The 82nd Airborne maintained three large segregated units: The 758th Tanker Battalion, the 80th AAAB, and the 3rd Battalion of the 505th Infantry Regiment. These units occupied segregated areas of Fort Bragg and the surrounding military posts. Corporal James Field was, by his recollection, the first man in line when volunteers were asked for. Edward Posey, *The US Army's First, Last, and Only All-Black Rangers: The 2nd Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) in the Korean War, 1950-1951* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2009), 1-3.

against preconceived notions of inferiority.[30] Through perseverance and results, the men graduated and earned high but somewhat condescending praise from some of the very individuals that originally doubted them. Colonel John Van Houten, the head of the Ranger School, remarked on multiple occasions that the 2nd Ranger Company as a segregated unit was the "…best of its type that I have seen."[31]

Deployed to Korea in late December 1950, the men of the 2nd Rangers inherited a very different war than the one they were training for. Attached to the 32nd Regimental Combat Team of the 7th Infantry Division, the Rangers joined the war effort as the People's Republic of China was entering the conflict. Stationed in the remote northeast mountains of North Korea, the Chosin Reservoir witnessed some of the most brutal weather and fighting conditions of the entire Korean War. Originally trained to act as reconnaissance and a screening force for advancing conventional forces, the Rangers joined an army under attack and the auspices of retreat. Suffering heavy casualties at the Battle of Chosin, the 7th Division used the Rangers as a stop gap early on in plugging holes in the lines. They were not trained to serve as line infantry, and this move highlighted further inconsistencies between the Rangers' design and ultimate application in Korea.

"The enemy was everywhere. We opened up with everything we had, and we really poured it on," Herman Jackson recalled about one of the first contacts with the enemy after the 2nd Rangers arrived. It was past three in the morning and the incoming Chinese soldiers had given their position away when Jackson and the other Rangers heard the ice of a nearby frozen river cracking. When the short firefight subsided and the casualties were counted, the Rangers viewed close to fifty Chinese bodies in the immediate vicinity. Jackson and his fellow Buffalo Rangers had been in Korea for only a

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[30] "Ranger History—314.7," Box 10, Ranger Training Center, Infantry Center: General Records 1950-51. Record Group 337, National Archives Records Administration II. College Park, MD, *NARA.*

[31] Van Houston to Bolte, 13 November 1950, Section I, G-3 Ranger Records, Korean War, Box 380, RG 319, *NARA.*

week.[32] The battles at Tanyang Pass would become a familiar experience for the Rangers, and as the war raged forward, the unit was consistently misused by its commanders.

Throughout the month of January in 1951 the Rangers suffered mightily, experiencing heavy casualties in combat while battling the extreme cold of the Korean winter. In the worst moments of the mountain environment of Chosin, the temperatures dipped into the negative forties. Frostbite and other illness incapacitated countless U.S. soldiers fighting along the front lines. Following their first month in combat the 2nd Ranger Company numbered only 67 healthy men, whittled down from their original 121 that deployed to Korea. Several of the men were recommended for citations, like James Fields and McBert Higginbotham, for their actions near Tanyang.[33]

Fields and the other Rangers of the 2nd Company were hit hard by their use on the front lines. Nearly half of their first month in combat, they were placed in infantry roles against Chinese and North Korean attacks. The Ranger companies of Korea were designed to be fast-moving reconnaissance and anti-guerrilla units. As such they were smaller than standard line companies and lacked the proper firepower necessary for prolonged combat. Specially trained Ranger soldiers were being wounded and killed while completing the job of regular infantrymen, in essence wasting their training. This issue was greatly exacerbated when in early February the commanding general of X Corps, the command containing the 7th Infantry Division and the 2nd Rangers, issued a long-reaching order on replacement soldiers. Major General Ned Almond ordered that despite the integration orders of the U.S. Army, his command would send all African American replacement soldiers into the 2nd Ranger Company. Essentially using the Rangers as an instrument of segregation, this controversial order guaranteed that X Corps would remain a divided force. General Almond was not shy about his feelings toward African American soldiers, arguing on multiple occasions about their inefficiencies and "un-American"

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[32] "Recollections of Herman Jackson," Posey, 146-151. The Battle of Tanyang Pass saw the Rangers suffer their first casualty in Sergeant First Class Isaac Baker. The initial contact occurred during the early morning hours of January 8, 1951.
[33] "Recollections of James F. Fields." Posey, *All-Black Rangers,* 160-165; David Hogan Jr., *Raiders or Elite Infantry,* 49.

characteristics.[34] In addition, Almond's order further muddied the identity and capabilities of the 2nd Rangers by plugging non-properly trained men into the beleaguered company.

The 2nd Rangers re-entered combat operations in the early spring of 1951, taking part in several operations along U.S. offensives. Completing daring raids behind enemy lines and forming the spearhead of U.S. assaults, the Buffalo Rangers quickly made a name for themselves in American newspapers along with the other Ranger units in the field. Mid-February saw the Rangers make front page news for a reported "Banzai Charge," in which the men sprinted through a small town raking enemy positions with automatic fire. Like the rest of the Korean Ranger units, the 2nd developed and cherished their very own war cry in battle. Screaming "Buffalo" as they charged, the 2nd Rangers carved out an identity of their very own heritage.[35] As March came to a close, the 2nd Rangers took part in the only airborne operation for any of the airborne-qualified Ranger units. Operation Tomahawk saw some 3,500 Americans dropped behind the front lines as a blocking force to catch retreating Chinese soldiers. After successfully making the jump, the 2nd Rangers assisted in a swift American advance up the Korean peninsula.[36]

The summer of 1951 saw the Korean War sliding into stalemate as the United Nations and Chinese forces settled into more stable positions along the 38th parallel. The war entered into a new phase that lacked the instability and wild territorial changes of the first ten months of combat. This shift in warfare dictated a change in tactics and strategy for the American forces in Korea. One of these shifts saw the Army deactivate all of its Ranger companies, principally for manpower needs and lack of perceived success in the field. The men from these units split up and made their way as replacements into standard line infantry units. As the 2nd Ranger Company was deactivated, it received

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[34] Morris MacGregor. *Integration of the Armed Forces: 1940-1964* (Washington, D.C.: 2001), 135.

[35] Lindesay Parrott, "Red Bulge Broken by Allies in Korea; Chuchon Captured," *New York Times,* February 21, 1951.

[36] The 2nd Rangers received heavy praise for their actions in Operation Tomahawk and the following days, as they assisted the Army advance more than 20 miles in a few short days. Thomas Taylor, *Rangers Lead the Way* (Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing Company, 1996), 110 – 115.

numerous accolades and moments of recognition. Included was a detailed account of the unit's actions from the 7th Infantry Division's commanding officer Major General Claude Ferenbaugh and one of his Korean Army counterparts. Both letters highlight the difficulties of the units' campaign: the frequency of combat and loss, coupled with the complexity of the Rangers' identity. Both letters commend the officers and enlisted men of the 2nd Rangers as "highly professional and disciplined," remarking on the quality of men making up the force.[37]

CONCLUSION

By the mid-1950s the U.S. military achieved full integration, completing a process that in earnest had started nearly a century beforehand. Race dynamics continued as an issue during America's next conflict in Vietnam, where incidents of racial discrimination and violence regularly occurred. Events like the 1968 Long Binh Jail riot and the 1972 riot aboard the *U.S.S. Kitty Hawk* demonstrate the wide range of racial incidents occurring in Vietnam.[38] The integrated military occupied a large voice in the realms of the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements of the 1960s, when both White and Black veterans and civilians came together to protest an unpopular war. Overall, the experience of African Americans in the U.S. military serves as a marker of both progress and frustration. As the U.S. military evolved, so did race dynamics of institutions like the Army, Navy, and Marines. Even as the military attempted to integrate prior to society at large in 1948, it encountered resistance and continuing discrimination. From the USCT of the American Civil War to the 2nd Rangers of Korea, the military position on race has always reflected larger societal

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[37] "Letter of Appreciation," Maj Gen Ferenbaugh, Headquarters 7th Inf. Division. 30 July 1951; "Letter of Appreciation to Sgt. Earl Johnson," Big General Chang Do Young, Headquarters 7th Inf. Division, 28 July 1951. "Ranger History—314.7" *NARA.*

[38] For a broader look into the racial issues of the Vietnam War, see Gerald Goodwin, "Black and White in Vietnam" *New York Times,* July 18, 2017; Wallace Terry, *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History* (New York: Presidio/Ballantine Books, 1984); Frank McGee, *Same Mud, Same Blood*. (New York: NBC-Universal Media, LLC., 1967).

trends ongoing in the United States. It, therefore, serves as a critical element of the African American experience.

Discussion Questions

1. How does each historical period and conflicts reflect the context of their era?
2. How does the impact of the Cold War affect American military race dynamics?
3. What kind of role can a nation's military play in social movements like the African American Civil Rights movement?

Writing Prompt

In comparing civilian and military segregation, which influences which? Is the military influenced by societal movements or vice versa?

CHAPTER 11

Prophecy in the Streets: Prophetic Politics, Rhetoric, and Practices during the Civil Rights Movement

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INTRODUCTION

The range of descriptions of African American religious experiences has traditionally fallen between the sacred and the profane. Particularly, for African American religious experiences the Black Church has been viewed as the most sacred aspect of Black religious communities. Subsequently, the Black Church has been described as the driving force behind the agenda of Black leaders during the Civil Rights Movement.[1] However, it was not the Black Church that was the defining attribute of African American religious experiences during the middle of the twentieth century; rather, it was a particular idea that many held most sacred. The way African Americans testified to their own experience can be described as a prophetic testimony. The notion of prophecy was the force that inspired many leaders to use their day-to-day experiences as testimonies to start a movement that went beyond accommodation with the goal of transformation. In this context, prophetic testimony must be examined through the lens of political theology alongside history. The category of political theology helps to emphasize the deep connection between faith (a theological claim) and the exercise of faith (a political claim). In other words, political theology combines pragmatic functions of faith with the way it is practiced.

[1] Most notably this argument was made in David Chappell, *A Stone Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). In this work he argued that the church movements and revivalism were the key elements that forced social and political change especially in the South.

There were many movement leaders who did not separate their faith connection from daily activities. For them, the Black Church was more than an institution used to appeal to a higher power. It shaped their very existence. Political theology helps to articulate this point. Specifically, political theology nuances how to understand prophecy. The Black Church tradition's prophetic ideology can be understood through the categories of prophetic rhetoric, the politics of the prophetic, and the prophetic practices of freedom.[2] Together these categories form a framework to better understand the religious influence of prophetic religion on the Civil Rights Movement.

PARADOX IN THE BLACK CHURCH

Frequently, the Black Church tradition has been viewed as the most sacred space for African Americans. Consequently, Black Church institutions have been acknowledged as the center for social justice movements within Black communities. Yet whether it is through examining the classical period of the Civil Rights Movement or a look at modern day religious leaders, there has not been one specific way that Black communities have sought to liberate their identities from a world that has not often recognized their humanity. Past examples include the crusades of organizations such as the Nation of Islam and the Pan-African Movement, while the Black Lives Matter Movement is a current example. This has led to numerous paradoxical responses to both civil rights and social movements from Black religious organizations. The paradox that occurs across the spectrum of Black Church institutions is deeply rooted in the historical context from which the traditions have developed.

During the period of enslavement in the United States slave masters recognized that religion could be used as a form of social control, especially in Southern states. Slave

[2] The reader should note that a fuller discussion of the specific meaning of these terms will occur later in this chapter. However, to be the separation of these three is mainly used for analytical purposes and not practical. In fact, many movement leaders would serve as good as examples for all three expressions of the prophetic, and it is difficult to discern where one aspect ends and the other begins in some cases.

owners allowed slaves to hear biblical scripture, but only in so far as it reinforced the narrative that required their subordination to their masters.[3] Many slave owners realized that controlled religion could be used to make their slaves docile and subordinate. Slaves were typically allowed to have their own services where either a White overseer or another slave gave a sermon based on the guidance of the master. In other words, officially sanctioned Black churches were under the supervision of White pastors who used religion as a way to reinforce their social and political agenda.[4] To further limit any form of autonomy in Black churches, laws were created that prevented slaves from assembling together for "worship" or for any other purpose between sunrises and sunsets, even with a White master present in many Southern states. The only exception to these rules occurred when the slave masters took their slaves to an ordained White minister who regularly conducted services.[5] Furthermore, the influence of White masters on many Black Churches created a religious benevolence between slave and slave master that helped to keep intact the moral order that served to justify both the institution of slavery and the treatment of slaves. Slaveholders had a religious imperative to make money and to have a comfortable living, as long as they were faithful to God. Masters were supposed to take great interest in the slave's security because it would benefit both the slave and the owner. They also had the responsibility of teaching the slaves good behavior and morality.

They believed that religious instruction of the Black slaves would promote both their morality and their religion. Black churches became the ideal institution to realize the creation of a Christian interracial community. In these communities, slave owners would benevolently rule over their slaves, who were presumed to be satisfied with their positions in life.[6] This form of social control had some success with slaves. Most did not subscribe to the benevolent master motif that was impressed upon them, but the combination of

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[3] Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (NEW YORK: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[4] Ibid, 137.
[5] Ibid, 138.
[6] Ibid, 165.

various methods of oppression left many slaves in desperate need of hope from some source. Many who chose to challenge the dominant narrative had hope in a political freedom that was possible only in the afterlife. The language of the slave spirituals makes proclamations such as: "I'm gonna wait upon the Lord till my change comes."[7] This represents one polarity in which the Black Church was pulled. Indeed, this ideology continued well beyond the period of African enslavement and into the Civil Rights Movement era.

Many African Americans chose not to participate in civil rights protests and demonstrations because of their firm belief in God's ability to create the necessary social change without human intervention. An interview with both Black church leaders as well as their parishioners during the 1960s is evidence of this perception. Gary Marx quotes a parishioner from a Detroit church who states her thoughts on political activism: "I don't go for demonstrations. I believe that God created all men equal and at His appointed time He will give every man his portion, no one can hinder it."[8] Although this comment is only one anecdote, it was by no means an isolated incident. Perhaps the most recognized religious activist group during the Civil Rights Movement was Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). This organization sought tirelessly to incorporate political activism as a staple of the everyday practice of Christianity. However, despite its popularity there were many Black religious leaders who were highly critical of the organization because of its perceived over-involvement in politics. It has been estimated that as many as ninety percent of Black ministers shunned the activities of the SCLC.[9]

However, alongside this view of political and social activism in the Black Church tradition, there is another perspective that has an equally rich history. Social activism and divine liberation in the here and now have also been a distinct characteristic. African slave

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[7] Gary Marx, "Religion: Opiate or Inspiration of Civil Rights Militancy among Negroes," *American Sociological Review*, 32:1 (1967), 70.
[8] Marx, "Religion," 72.
[9] Alison Calhoun-Brown, "Upon This Rock: The Black Church, Nonviolence, and the Civil Rights*," Political Science and Politics*, 33:2 (2000), 172.

preachers such as Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner actively fought the injustices of slavery through political activism, going so far as to physically rebel and subsequently sacrifice their lives for justice in the now.[10] Marx noted that Black churches became the first platform from which protest organizations began and even served as the meeting place where protests and strategies were planned.[11] It became the basis for a sophisticated social consciousness and the spearhead for advocacy of social justice and change. Thus, even during the period of slavery many Blacks recognized that emancipation from the politics of the slavery institution could start from a religious foundation found in the Black Church tradition.[12] Before the Civil War, there were many African Americans who attended churches with their White masters and heard sermon after sermon encouraging them to work with blind obedience. However, many of the slaves held their own services where they preached a much different message. Although slave ministers were not always literate, they would preach the messages foretelling of their deliverance and condemning the evils of slavery according to biblical passages. Such messages allowed them to have a view of God that identified with their suffering and that would also ordain their insubordination against the slave institution.[13]

Furthermore, the Free Church Movement arose in the North to not only counter religious teachings that supported slavery, but also in direct opposition to the racism toward African Americans that existed in the North and South. By the 1700s, there was a small number of African American churches with independence from White congregations although many Black congregations shared the same worship space as White congregations. Many of those Black congregations still faced discrimination and segregation from White churches who refused to see African Americans as equal. In 1791, Black ministers Absalom Jones and Richard Allen decided to protest the unjust treatment of Black people in the Methodist Episcopal Church by walking out during the service. Just

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[10] Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution* (NEW YORK: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 158.
[11] Marx, "Religion," 65.
[12] Emancipation from the politics of the slave institution was necessary outside the period of enslavement. The politics of this institution governed policies in both the North and South for most of the 20th century.
[13] Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 169.

a few years later, both men played pivotal roles in the development in one of the earliest and most politically active Black church denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church. The AME church openly opposed all forms of racism and discrimination and openly supported the political work of abolitionists to end slavery.

Although the Free Church Movement lead to the creation of Black denominations with a strong sense of social activism and call to liberation, there were still some Black congregations with strong connections to White churches in South, even after the Civil War. Throughout churches in the South, African Americans tested the authority of their former master.[14] Initially many African Americans attended White churches, but they began to recognize the hypocrisy of both the clergy and White parishioners and broke away from those churches. Hasan Jeffries elaborated on this process, specifically in Lowndes County, Alabama. In 1871, members of a local Baptist church in Lowndes officially broke away from the White church that it was a part of and created a new church. During this process, they gained their own religious autonomy and further shaped the religious tradition of the Black Church.[15] Although these churches did not have sophisticated structures, they still served as the epicenter for African American social experiences and as a place for social networking with services that were essential to the survival of Black communities. These buildings also housed secret societies that strategized about facilitating the total emancipation of African Americans. Groups such as the Knights of Wise Men, the Knights of Pythias, and Odd Fellows mobilized resources that would be necessary to advocate for social change and freedom rights.[16] Although their overall mission was to obtain freedom rights, they carefully and cautiously planned a way to achieve their goals. They meticulously calculated the cost and benefits for each way to achieve their goals and chose a few options to pursue. For example, they planned to obtain social autonomy by withdrawing completely from White churches, controlling

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[14] Hasan Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (NEW YORK: New York University Press, 2009), 11.
[15] Ibid, 12.
[16] Ibid, 13.

their labor, and becoming literate.[17] Similar stories could be told about Black congregations in localities across the rural South.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE MEANING OF PROPHECY IN THE MOVEMENT

The purpose of exploring the paradox found in the Black Church is to understand how two seemingly contradictory ideologies can exist within the same religious tradition. This paradox also highlights the fact that there was not one specific religious lifestyle for Black communities historically, even within the Black Church. Finally, it alludes to the fact that the prophetic call is not inherent in African American religious traditions. Rather, the notion of prophecy works as a specific religious belief system that is translated into everyday practices. The influence of the prophetic tradition on the everyday lives of African American communities during the classic period of the Civil Rights Movement can be described using the term prophetic testimony. Prophetic testimony describes the relationship between individual religious encounters and how those encounters are simultaneously shaped by the community. To state it simply, individuals with deep religious convictions translate those convictions into activism on behalf of their community. In the context of the Civil Rights Movement, prophetic testimony created religious grounds for African Americans to demand their rights to be treated as human subjects. Furthermore, it created a God-ordained imperative for African Americans to do whatever was necessary to create communal thriving. Many Civil Rights leaders who embodied this view of prophetic testimony were not satisfied with merely gaining civic accommodations; rather they yearned for something much deeper. In many respects they were embarking on a quest to have their full humanity recognized both socially and politically.

Furthermore, prophetic testimony also involves living out the prophetic vision. For many movement leaders, prophecy articulated a socio-political practice that transcended

[17] Ibid, 14.

culture.[18] Prophecy plays a social role to mediate between humanity and the realities that are outside of their control, but nevertheless profoundly affects the fates of their community. Prophetic testimony created the responsibility for movement leaders to announce their prophetic vision. During the Civil Rights Movement it involved publicly denouncing social injustice and to speak the truth to systemic power structures. It involved the use of powerful rhetoric/language to invoke a move toward social justice. The prophetic announcement is a passionate plea towards an audience to critically engage in self-reflection. It is a contestation of political and hierarchical order.[19] Finally, a prophetic announcement speaks imperatively and unequivocally not about a religious dogma but about the acknowledgement of the pain and suffering of disenfranchised people.[20]

PREDECESSORS TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

It is important to note that there are many examples of how African Americans relied on a prophetic vision through churches and other religious organization prior to the classic Civil Rights Movement era. African American preachers and abolitionists such as Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and many more fought to have the right of all African Americans recognized. However, there were also several organizations that mobilized large numbers of African Americans and Whites in the struggle for freedom and equality. An early example of politics of the prophetic involved the mobilization of both Black and White women in the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).[21]

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[18] Vincent W. Lloyd, *Race and Political Theology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 235.
[19] Walter Steven, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and Imagination* (NEW YORK: Vintage, 1951).
[20] Ibid, 237.
[21] Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

By the end of the nineteenth century, many women were able to take advantage of the rights that they and their husbands won during and after Reconstruction. Most importantly, they were able to capitalize on the opportunity to receive an education. They were most often educated at seminaries, which offered free education. These women left the seminaries with zeal to fight for racial and gender equality. Education provided a real possibility for some women of color to exercise political freedom. They were driven by an ethos of usefulness. Their theological training gave them the spiritual conviction to strive for changes in society. The WCTU also served as a testimony to their prophetic faith and its application. These women of color, in some cases, had even more opportunities than White women.[22] By joining organizations like the WCTU, women of color did not have to choose between education and marrying. They were able to create interracial alliances with White women. White women in these organizations knew that they needed the support of African American women to be truly effective. They used their religious motivation to fight for access to political power. However, around the turn of the twentieth century White supremacy usurped this movement to isolate the issue of race to divide the White women from the women of color.

One incident that facilitated this division was the 1898 Wilmington White Supremacist Campaign in North Carolina. Democrats, in an effort to regain political power in the state, formed a campaign to unite the White population against African Americans. They used newspaper propaganda and dynamic speeches to present the progressive alliance between the Black and White working class as a threat to all White people. Specifically, Blacks were portrayed as dangerous to the safety of White women, which effectively ended the interracial meetings of the WCTU. As the campaign continued, Black voters were intimidated from voting by groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Similar strategies were used throughout the South to dissuade interracial alliances and to limit the impact of groups such as the WCTU.[23] Although this alliance did not last long, it showed that even in a period that predated the classical period of the Civil Rights Movement, the

[22] Ibid, 56.
[23] Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow.*

prophetic vision capable of social transformation was alive and well. It also demonstrates the power of the prophetic to transcend racial and gender alliances to fight for justice.

RHETORIC OF THE PROPHETIC

The field of political theology provides the context to understand the function of prophetic testimony during the Civil Rights Era and to analyze the categories of rhetoric, politics, and practices during the Movement.[24] African American leaders during the Movement were motivated by a view that saw prophecy as more than a rhetorical position, or way of speaking. They saw it as an office that they felt compelled to hold. Taking the office of a prophet required a public practice that was open to revision.[25] When leaders took on this position, they also made the decision to engage their communities with prophetic speech. They did not meet any specific requirement to take up the position; rather, they simply shared the common conviction to engage in critiques of society and culture. Their prophetic testimonies condemned various forms of socio-political injustices. Many of these leaders relied on the biblical roots of their faith to inform the voice that they used as a prophetic critique of the U.S. during the second half of the twentieth century. Martin Buber notes of the office of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible, "Biblical prophets neither decree fate nor predict the future but rather seek a decision about the constitutive commitments and practices of the people they address."[26] Thus, leaders during the Civil Rights Movement not only saw their prophetic testimonies as critiques of society but also of faith practices and religious institutions. They questioned what it meant to be American and Christian with respect to the norms of racism, segregation, and the consistent defiling of human life by White Christians throughout the United States.

The rhetoric used during the classic period of the Civil Rights Movement has been analyzed by various scholars. Houck and Dixon note that the notions of biblical prophecy

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[24] Lloyd, *Race and Political Theology*, 235.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith* (NEW YORK: Harper & Row, 1949) 81.

were the rhetorical hinge on which the movement pivoted.[27] It was not confined to churches or pulpits. Prophetic rhetoric was used at funerals, during marches, in political speeches, at conferences, during interviews, and in practically any place where there was an audience. There were many movement leaders who helped to transform a nation through their prophetic speeches. There are famous speeches from well-known movement figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Stokely Carmichael, and Ella Baker. It is no secret that the speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. helped to shape an entire nation's view on the civil rights struggle. His "I Have a Dream" speech was the keynote address during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In that speech he spoke of his biblical vision for a world that provided equal opportunities for all people regardless of skin color. His speech called out many racist practices in Southern states and was pivotal in placing civil rights legislation at the top of the political agenda for the White House. This speech remains one of his most recognizable speeches today. However, alongside the famous speeches, there were other ones that were equally as impactful. Leaders such as Cleveland Jordan, Ed King, Lawrence Campbell, Dave Dennis, and Mamie Till-Bradley all made use of prophetic rhetoric to advocate for their cause.

Mamie Till-Bradley has recently become more recognized for her contribution to womanist scholarship. She has become iconic in the field because of her representation of the grieving Black woman who finds strength through her pain. Through her courage and conviction, she helped to inspire a generation of activists, while simultaneously helping to define Black womanhood in the midst of oppression.[28] Her actions in 1955 following her son Emmett's brutal murder in Money, Mississippi, made her a hero for many people. She had his remains shipped back to Chicago and insisted on an open-casket funeral. She wanted any and all to see the vile ugliness of racism in America. The

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[27] Davis Houck and David Dixon, *Rhetoric, Religion, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006) 6.
[28] Katie Cannon, Emilie Townes, Angela Sims, *Womanist Theological Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011) 176.

images from the casket appeared in several prominent newspapers and magazines.[29] During the trial of her son she traveled to Sumner, Mississippi, and gave a speech relaying her agony and pain.[30]

Perhaps her most memorable speech occurred on October 29, 1955, several weeks after her son's murder trial had officially ended in a not guilty verdict.[31] At a Baltimore rally for the NAACP at Bethel AME Church, Till-Bradley evoked prophetic rhetoric by using God's presence as guidance to how her suffering would move the struggle for freedom and civil rights forward. She stated both religiously and secularly what the death of her son meant to her: "I thank God that he felt that I was worthy to have a son that was worthy to die for such a worthy cause… I have invested a son in freedom and I'm determined that his death isn't in vain."[32] Throughout her speech she called for many to sacrifice their comfort to "make this world one we would be proud of."[33] She likened her loss to Abraham when he had to sacrifice his only son Isaac. She reiterated the point that everyone must come to terms with reality someday: in order for lasting change to occur, people must be committed to the cause, and true commitment meant the willingness to sacrifice everything for justice and freedom. For her this included her own son.[34]

The most powerful moment of this speech was when she called out the virulent racism that haunted America, and more specifically Mississippi. She described her anxiety trying to find out information about her son. While Soviet Russia had an "Iron Curtain," while the state of Mississippi had what she called a "Cotton Curtain."[35] It was nearly impossible for her to find the whereabouts of her son. No one wanted to utter the unspeakable. She stated that her aim in telling her story was to pinpoint the conditions that made her son's death possible and the conditions that made the country a farce of

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[29] All the newspapers where his image was published were Black-owned because White newspapers and magazines would not publish the images.
[30] Houck and Dixon, *Rhetoric Religion,* 131.
[31] Ibid, 132.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid, 133.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

a democracy. Despite her despair and the grief that she felt, Mamie Till-Bradley ended her speech with hope for transformation in the now. She stated: "I don't think that freedom is so far away that we are not going to enjoy it. I think that pretty soon this thing is going to be over. In fact, it's over now, we just haven't realized it. The tooth has been pulled out, but the jaw is still swollen."[36] This speech by Mamie Till-Bradley embodied the meaning of prophetic rhetoric as a feature of prophetic testimony. She called out the social injustices, using her faith to sustain her. She also articulated a call to action that necessitated a response by all. She was able to use her own experiences as an announcement of a prophetic call to the American populace.

Mamie Till-Bradley's prophetic voice mirrored the power of another hero of the movement—namely, Fannie Lou Hamer. Hamer was born the youngest of twenty children in 1917, and at an early age she realized that there was something wrong with the state of Mississippi.[37] Much like Mamie Till, Hamer was willing to sacrifice everything for the cause of justice and freedom. She entered the movement officially after attending a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) rally in 1962 and hearing speeches by James Bevel and James Foreman. Perhaps her most memorable speech was in Atlantic City, as a representative for Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) during the Democratic convention in 1964. During this speech she asked the pivotal question "Is this America?"[38] Her question was aimed at the utter hysteria that White America seemed to be in, as African Americans fought for justice and equality. This question confronted America with its history of violence and racism toward people of color, whose only desire was to reclaim their humanity in a world that failed to fully acknowledge their existence. During her speech she stood firm on her conviction and told the truth about the political farce in Mississippi, which disguised itself as the democratic process. Her speech was so powerful that President Lyndon Johnson censored her nationally televised speech by interrupting it to give his own televised speech. The prophetic voice of this poor

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[36] Ibid, 145.
[37] Vicki Crawford, Jaqueline Rouse, and Barbara Woods, *Women in the Civil Rights Movement*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 27.
[38] Ibid, 29.

sharecropper from Mississippi was so distinct that she was able to intimidate the most powerful man in the United States more than the most recognizable figures of the movement. Hamer's speech in Atlantic City did not occur in a religious setting, but it was filled with her religious convictions.

Hamer embraced a religious hope to help create future change. She described the beating that she took at the hands of the prisoners under the order of White officers. She prayed that God would have mercy on them because she understood the righteousness of her cause. She also spoke out against the hypocrisy of White American and White Christian values. She was imprisoned, persecuted, and beaten all on account of wanting to exercise a constitutional right. She stated: "All of this is on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens. And if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America. Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?"[39] Although Hamer's prophetic vision was not realized in 1964, her ability to call out political hypocrisy in the South was instrumental in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Despite the powerful speeches by many great speakers, they were not enough to create the social reforms that defined the Civil Rights Era. Key leaders in the movement understood that their prophetic vision could be utilized to create vibrant concrete political organizations that could help their communities.

POLITICS OF THE PROPHETIC

Another important aspect of a rich notion of the prophetic is how these ideas connected with a communal view of justice in society. A prophetic view of justice combines individual norms and values with the concerns of the community to create a new perspective on the meaning of equality. In the context of the Civil Rights Movement Era the practice of justice involved allowing disenfranchised communities such as African Americans to be

[39] Ibid, 32.

involved in institutions that fought for full equality in all aspects of life. Movement leaders who had a prophetic view of politics knew that their sense of justice had to infiltrate both laws and institutions.[40] The starting point for the way many leaders understood justice began with their perspective on human ethics. Accordingly, humanitarian ethics could best be simplified as the moral obligations that one person holds toward another solely because they are human. The moral philosopher Emmanuel Levinas expresses this outlook by imagining a human being that is stripped away from all social roles, clothed with nothing but human vulnerabilities. Justice means to give each person everything that is owed to them.[41] The responsibility to someone else, in their most vulnerable state, was viewed as the basic principle for justice.

A key to the political success of leaders during the classic Civil Rights period is that they were motivated by the need to interrogate societal norms. Vincent Lloyd, a scholar of Black theology, argues that the most effective civil rights leaders such as W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Luther King Jr., Anna Julia Cooper, and many others were able to critically analyze the norms that shaped the daily existence of Black Americans. These leaders knew that without this criticism the separation between norms and laws was arbitrary. For many African Americans who lived in the South, it was easy to take for granted the difference between written laws and social norms, largely because Jim Crow laws consisted of both formal and informal codes that ranged from formal policies that prevented African Americans from eating in the same establishments as Whites to informal policies that monitored the way African Americans greeted Whites. When movement leaders used prophetic politics, they named the laws and institutional structures that continually perpetuated the disenfranchisement of the Black population and, in effect, created an intentional separation between norms and laws. Creating a distinction between laws and norms produced a tension between the freedoms that many Americans claimed to believe and how those same beliefs were influenced by their views on race. Specifically, many White Americans professed a belief in fairness and equality

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[40] Vincent Lloyd, *The Problem with Grace,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) 168.
[41] Ibid, 168.

for all as a societal norm. However, movement leaders questioned this norm of equality because legal precedents in both the North and South denied many African Americans the ability to achieve full equality through public accommodations and access to political power. This point is crucial when examining the historical roots of tensions between laws and norms in society. Various political organizations during the Civil Rights Movement used this philosophy to attack racist White supremacist structures that perpetuated inequalities. These organizations fought against inequality in the classroom, in the courtroom, at lunch counters, and in many other areas.

Prophetic politics can be examined historically through the political institutions that African Americans relied upon to express their prophetic vision. This includes the way Black churches and religious institutions mobilized under a message of political equality. The political aspect of prophecy describes the connection between laws and dominant ideologies that worked to perpetuate a culture of White supremacy. The prophetic vision was preached in the pulpit of congregations and then taken to the streets by congregants. Organizations like the NAACP, SNCC, SCLC, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were a few of the organizations that embodied principles of the prophetic politics. These diverse organizations used many different approaches to counter racist institutional policies.

Black churches also played a pivotal role in expressions of the prophetic vision. At various points during the Civil Rights Era, movement leaders such as Bob Zellner, Stokely Carmichael, and Eli Zaretsky used churches as headquarters to think through and implement political strategies to attack Jim Crow laws.[42] Black Churches were mobilized to meet the needs of the community and to help create a sense of autonomy for African Americans. Much like the years following the period of Reconstruction, churches served as a place to network and to provide services that many African Americans could not obtain otherwise. In some instances, leaders of these churches formed organizations that took the place of larger organizations such as the NAACP, which was banned in several

[42] Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 373.

states.[43] According to sociologist Aldon Morris, these new organizations brought the same vibrant culture that permeated through their churches into political actions and community activities.[44]

The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth exemplified the political aspect of prophetic testimony through his leadership as a pastor and community organizer during the Civil Rights Movement. In 1956 the state of Alabama forced all NAACP organizations in the state to disband. However, Shuttlesworth would not let the organization die so easily. He reorganized the NAACP as the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR).[45] His organization proved to be more troublesome for White supremacists in Alabama than the NAACP ever was. The ACMHR engaged in boycotts, pickets, and demonstrations, and the group filed lawsuits to attack White Jim Crow legislation.[46] It was the ACMHR who decided to protest segregated busing in Birmingham when the court ruled bus segregation as unconstitutional. Shuttlesworth used the mobilization of his church and organization to challenge White dominance and social order. These attacks were not without its consequences. The night before he led the bus boycotts, his home was bombed with his family inside. He received death threats on a daily basis and his phone was tapped by both the Klan and local police. His church was constantly under attack, his wife was harmed, and even his kids were attacked. Despite this retaliation, his organization continued to attack White supremacy by pushing the city to hire Black police officers, allow Black access to public accommodations, desegregate schools, and above all enable the right to vote.[47]

Although the Black church was sometimes a sanctuary for the political voices of African Americans in both the North and South, this was not the case in every situation. There were many situations where the Black church did not have political mobility or

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[43] Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (NEW YORK: The Free Press, 1984), 43.
[44] Ibid, 47.
[45] Steven Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006) 123.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid, 124.

stability because it was co-opted by the efforts of Whites, in both the North and South. Another prophetic visionary, Albert Cleage Jr., serves as an example. Cleage was deeply concerned with the political manifestations of his theological beliefs. He was an advocate of the Black Power Movement before Stokely Carmichael popularized the term. Cleage's perspective was unique because his theology served as the starting point for his political views on the meaning of Black Power. Through Cleage's Black Nationalist ideas he combined religious and political strategies to address the pressing social problems in both local and national arenas. Cleage was greatly influenced by his mentor at the Plymouth Congregation, Reverend Horace A. White. White challenged the social control of the Ford Motor Company over Black churches and Black interests. Ford had made a deal with many Black church pastors to gain workers. Ford agreed to hire non-union Black workers in their factories only if they could show proof of their church affiliation. Thus, many Black churches in Detroit were not autonomous because they had obligations to the Ford Motor Company. Cleage's experiences with Reverend White left a strong impression on him. He would spend the rest of his life ensuring that his own church remained an independent institution and not subject to corporations such as Ford. He fully understood the ways that Black churches could be co-opted by industrialists or other corporations who did not care about the concerns of the Black community. After graduating from seminary, Cleage became outspoken against police brutality, employment discrimination, and racial segregation of housing in the North.[48] When he started his own church on 12th Street in Detroit, he blended theology, social criticism, and a call to action. His approach was especially appealing to young professionals and activists.[49]

Cleage's new church took his Black Nationalist ideas and applied them to public school systems and the practice of urban renewal. His organization called GOAL protested tax increases that would disproportionately affect poor African American children in local school districts. His radical view for immediate reform clashed with the gradual approach

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[48] Dillard, *Religion and Radicalism,* 152.

[49] Angela D. Dillard, "Religion and Radicalism: The Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr. and The Rise of Black Christian Nationalism," in Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 152-162.

of the NAACP and even some of his former church mentors. Cleage's prophetic politics was guided by an activist faith that was an unflinching political commitment. His deeply held religious convictions helped him to understand that his political views could not be separated from his practice of theology. Thus, for Cleage, his political activism also served as his prophetic testimony to the insufficiencies that he found in Black church institutions to address some of the needs of its adherents. Although rhetoric and politics were both effective ways for African Americans to use their religious experiences as testimonies, the most common way to testify to their experiences was through their day to day activities.

PROPHETIC PRACTICES OF FREEDOM

Daily practices were perhaps the most important way that African American leaders displayed their understanding of a prophetic vision. During the Civil Rights Movement, many leaders fought for more than just public accommodations; they sought to have the rest of America acknowledge their personhood. In this respect, social and political activism went beyond fighting for any specific policy-making initiative. It involved demanding that the subjective experiences of marginalized groups be recognized through daily interactions. The pursuit of human dignity became the definition of freedom for leaders in African American communities. Said differently, these individuals used day-to-day interactions as a testimony for their vision of the future, and how to bring that vision to fruition in the present. Spiritual convictions allowed some activists to have an unwavering faith in themselves and their communities as they fought for justice and equality.

Many movement leaders understood a basic principle on how to truly secure freedom despite resistance from both individuals and institutions that tried to deny them their humanity. For these leaders, freedom had to be an intentional daily practice. Philosopher Michel Foucault gives helpful insight on how freedom can be intentional. He states: "Freedom is practice…the freedom of [the individual] is never assured by the laws and the institutions that are intended to guarantee them. This is why almost all of these laws and institutions are quite capable of being turned around. Not because they are

ambiguous, but simply because 'freedom' is what must be exercised…I think it can never be inherent in the structure of things to (itself) guarantee the exercise of freedom."[50] No group understood this principle of practical belief better than the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. They were able to carry over their religious faith into their daily actions. Prophetic practices of freedom are the actions that individuals or groups take to shape their own destiny and serve as a way for disenfranchised people to recognize their human dignity at an individual level. They understood that it was only after recognition of one's own self-worth that the struggle to combat oppressive structures was possible.[51]

What cannot be overstated about the success of the Civil Rights Movement is that it was in large part because of the individual action of local people. Rhetorical speeches and political activism from various organizations no doubt played an important role. However, to be clear, it was the involvement of local people in their communities fighting for justice daily that really transformed a nation. Historian John Dittmer attributes the success of the Civil Rights Movement to the activities of local activists such as Amzie Moore, Victoria Grey, Annie Divine, and the other more recognized figures such as Medgar Evers and Fannie Lou Hamer. These individuals and many others had energy and enthusiasm to organize communities, register voters, boycott buses, and stage protests. Other practices that leaders employed included freedom songs, poetry, and self-empowerment through education.[52] The willingness of local people to act on their own behalf helped them to overcome the seemingly insurmountable racist institutions in places throughout the North and South.

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[50] Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader,* (NEW YORK: Random House, 1984) 245.
[51] Brad Stone*, "*Prophetic Pragmatism and the Practices of Freedom: On Foucauldian Methodology*," Foucault Studies*, 11 (2011), 103.
[52] The process of freedom through education occurred in several different ways. Albert Cleage and others used religious education as a form of self-education as they learned to believe in a God that looked like them and understood their suffering. Other activists such as Stokely Carmichael would empower themselves through educating themselves about their African heritage. In some instances, self-empowerment through education led to the creation of African American Studies programming in school throughout the country. In any case, no matter the result, many African Americans sought to empower themselves through education.

Prophetic practices of freedom are best demonstrated through the work of local leaders in their community. Two lesser-known African American female leaders who played vital roles in advocating for social changes in their community were the late Margaret Block and Flonzie Brown-Wright. As a field secretary for SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee). Block was involved in social activist campaigns during the Civil Rights Movement in three different counties in Mississippi. She worked alongside some of the most prominent figures of the time, including Fannie Lou Hamer, Stokely Carmichael, and Lawrence Guyot. Block's character was enduring because of her ability to speak truth to power regardless of the circumstances. She played the role of the prophet by speaking against social injustices even within the organizations that were dedicated to fighting for freedom. For example, although she was a member of the SCLC, she criticized the organization for its patriarchal leadership structure. Eventually, she left the organization to join SNCC because it provided her with more opportunities to create change. Block's life showed that in many cases the prophetic vision of Black women allowed them to be the foot soldiers of the movement, who created all of the networks, made all of the phone calls, and provided basic necessities for the volunteers for the various political campaigns.

Block also strongly believed in the power of the freedom songs as a prophetic practice. These songs were spiritual in the sense that they helped to remind activists why they were fighting for justice. At the same time, these songs were great for organizing the masses. On Sundays the songs were sung in church, but by Wednesday they were freedom songs that were sung on the streets and in marches throughout the country.[53] Block also had prophetic critiques of formal religious institutions such as churches. She understood how religion was able to simultaneously inhibit the efforts of some activists while at the same time it had the ability to motivate others into action. Her brand of Christianity did not focus on church involvement or adherence to a specific doctrine. In

[53] Dittmer, *Local People*.

fact, far from it, she often shunned organized religion and church practices.[54] However, Block also held her own deep religious convictions. She believed that through embodying the everyday practices of Jesus, she could truly experience the Christian faith. Her poetry served as another expression of her prophetic practices. An excerpt from the poem "Justice and Jive" reads:

> Where was Justice when slavery abounded, Perhaps she was helping Old Master keep Swobo's nose to the ground. They took away his children, his culture, his language and his identity but they could not take his dignity. Madame Justice, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide. You call it Justice but it's just another word for Jive.[55]

Block's poetry demonstrates her ability to unequivocally call out America's hypocritical conception of justice. Her poem shows how the Constitution had guaranteed the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, yet it had simultaneously denied those same rights to slaves. Rather than providing African Americans with the opportunity to pursue freedom, the Founding Fathers allowed the Constitution to be used to take away the language and culture of the slave population. By creating two separate standards for the pursuit of freedom, their view of justice was worthless because it did not apply to everyone. Block's poems also described many other historical moments when African Americans were forced to realize that they did not fit into America's depiction of justice.

Another individual who exemplified prophetic practices of freedom through her everyday life was Flonzie Brown-Wright, who continues to be a prolific civil rights activist in her home state of Mississippi. Her journey into social activism is an unlikely one. Yet it also serves as an example of how no limitations determine when someone can receive the prophetic call. In the preface of her autobiography she wrote, "I have always believed that I was endowed with a special gift from God, a gift that has taken me to heights that

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[54] Alan Bean, "In Memoriam: Margaret Block," July 11, 2015, https://friendsofjustice.wordpress.com/2015/07/11/in-memoriam-margaret-block/, last accessed July 11, 2019.

[55] Margaret Block, "Justice and Jive," http://www.crmvet.org/poetry/pblockm.htm, last accessed July 11, 2019.

I could not have reached had it not been for His kindness and mercy."[56] Thus, like many movement leaders who lived out the prophetic faith, her religious conviction was not based solely on a particular doctrine or church teaching, rather it was based on a deeply spiritual call that she received from God.

Brown-Wright was born on August 12, 1942, in Farmhaven, Mississippi, and grew up alongside her older brother Sydney and her younger brother Frank Brown. During her childhood in a rural Mississippi small town, she did not personally experience racism. However, she would later admit that as a child, she recognized the disparity in the educations that Black children in her neighborhood received. Soon after high school she married her high school sweetheart and moved to California.[57] While she lived in California, Brown-Wright had two children with her husband. During her time in California she received her first exposure to the Civil Rights Movement. She lived in Los Angeles during the 1960s, and could only stare in disbelief when she saw footage from the protests in Watts and other places throughout the state.[58] She has readily admitted that at that time in her life she knew very little about the Civil Rights Movement even though it was happening in front of her eyes. Her only concern was to be the best mother and wife that she could be. In late 1962, everything changed for Flonzie Brown-Wright. Her marriage fell apart, and she officially divorced her husband, followed by a decision that would change her life forever. She decided to move back home to Canton, Mississippi.

At this time, Brown-Wright did not know her purpose in life. All she knew was that she was a single mother, living at home with her parents, and struggling to meet her daily needs. For two years after she returned home, she wrestled with self-doubt, the burden of being an unemployed single mother in the South, the vulnerabilities of being a young Black woman, and various other uncertainties in her life. She has since admitted that her strong faith in God was the only thing that carried her through the most difficult time in her life. It was at this time that she found her purpose in life and a call that she

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[56] Flonzie Brown-Wright, *Looking Back to Move Ahead: An Experience of History, a Journey of Hope* (Dayton: Profile Digital Printing, 2000), vii.
[57] Ibid, 31.
[58] Ibid, 45.

would spend the rest of her day pursuing. She remarked at the end of her two-year struggle that she felt called by God to participate in the ongoing struggle for freedom for African Americans in Mississippi. She wrote: "My decision to become involved in the struggle for mankind was not an easy one. I believed that was what God wanted me to do."[59] She also admitted that at first she was reluctant to answer her call. She would think of excuse after excuse to avoid the call that was aching away at her heart. At first, she did not believe she could embark on the task she had been called to because she was not a famous leader. Then she heard a voice that told her that God uses ordinary people for great tasks. Eventually Mrs. Brown-Wright was motivated by her spiritual convictions to be a force for change in the daily lives of Black citizens in Canton, Mississippi. She would later write a poem to express her prophetic call:

> There are people who are hurting. There are children who are sick. There are elderly who need you. Go! There are people who need a sense of value. There are young mothers who need a listening ear. There are people who have faced discrimination in all forms. Go!There are People who need encouragement to register and vote. There are people who need job training. There are people who need to have their minds liberated. Go! You've got to Go! I am Molding You For Service. You've got to Go! I am preparing you to take a message to a hurting world. Go! Go! Go![60]

Since the moment that Brown-Wright decided to embark on her own freedom practices, she never looked back, dedicating over fifty years to the cause of freedom. She became caught up in the movement after the assassination of famed civil rights leader Medgar Evers. In 1963, she reopened an NAACP office that had been closed for years. At this time, the biggest impediment to the freedom of African Americans in Mississippi was the right to vote.[61] In this vein, Brown-Wright and others created freedom schools to teach

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[59] Ibid, 41.
[60] Ibid, 43.
[61] The state of Mississippi was notorious for its poll tax, which legally discriminated against Black voters. It was also known for its 21-item registration questionnaire

the African American population how to register to vote. They would prepare them for several obstacles that they would face when they tried to register, such as how to complete the twenty-one-question registration card, how to face violent resistance from Whites, how to interpret the constitution, and how to handle being attacked by police officers. She would also host "freedom meetings" at local churches and organizations.[62] These meetings were used to devise strategies to counter voter suppression and to increase the number of Black voters. Brown-Wright and others helped to galvanize participants at these meeting using "freedom songs." These songs were used to help activists to be mentally prepared for the challenges they faced as they pursued their right to vote. Brown-Wright also scheduled home visits to meet with those who were interested in registering to vote but were too intimated by groups like the Ku Klux Klan to do so. Eventually, her efforts began to payoff and more Blacks registered to vote. Her involvement in this effort had great religious significance on her life. She wrote: "One person would come in to register, soon to be followed by an entire household. This feeling was the same as 'getting new religion'"[63] Her prophetic work to register voters culminated in 1968 when she was elected as the first African American female election commissioner in Mississippi.

CONCLUSION

distributed only to Blacks. They also used various other methods of voter disenfranchisement; this allowed places such as Canton, Mississippi, to have fewer than two hundred registered Black voters. This number is particularly startling because the large populace of African Americans in Canton. Over seventy percent of the total population (30,000) was African American.

[62] At first many Black churches were reluctant to host freedom meetings because of the fear of terrorist acts. This statement reinforces the point that Black churches were not always safe havens for African Americans, thus they could not be the producers of an imperative for social change. Rather individuals used their convictions to persuade churches of the moral imperative to create change.

[63] Brown-Wright, *Looking Back to Move Ahead*, 73.

Both Margaret Block and Flonzie Brown-Wright demonstrate how the notion of prophecy is reflected in everyday lives. For these women their prophetic vision was more than a call to action; it was the way to spend the rest of their lives. Their daily encounters served as testimonies to their prophetic vision. Their stories are a part of a larger narrative that typified much of the religious activism that occurred during the Civil Rights Movement. Many individuals, communities, and churches were captivated by an idea that empowered them to pursue justice, freedom, and equality. A rich conception of prophecy allowed movement leaders to develop tactics to aid them in their fight. Specifically, they utilized prophetic rhetoric, politics, and practices to advocate changes that would challenge an entire nation. By following their prophetic call, they were able to ensure lasting changes that would benefit generations of African American men and women that would follow them. They proved that indeed individuals dedicated to pursuing a vision could create social change.

Discussion Questions

1. How were African Americans able to use speeches as a tool to fight for justice during the Civil Rights Movement?
2. What political organizations did African Americans develop to challenge segregation in the North and South during the Civil Right Movement?
3. What role did churches play in the way that many African Americans were able to advocate for social change?
4. How were freedom songs used by movement leaders during social protests?

Writing Prompt

What do the stories of Margaret Block and Flonzie Brown-Wright tell us about the ways that individuals can fight for social justice in their daily lives? How have prophetic rhetoric, politics, or practices been used in contemporary movements to advocate for social change (Black Lives Matter, #Metoo, etc.)?

Chapter 12

"The Whole Matter Revolves around the Self-Respect of My People": Black Conservative Women in the Civil Rights Era

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INTRODUCTION

In response to *Brown v. Board of Education*, the foundational case reflecting decades of hard work by civil rights activists to desegregate public education, famed Black novelist Zora Neale Hurston remarked, "I regard the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court as insulting." [1] To her, "the whole matter revolves around the self-respect of my people…I see no tragedy in being too dark to be invited to a White social affair."[2] Black schools, run and operated by Black communities, were Hurston's ideal, and the idea of holding integrated White schools as the standard bearer ran against her deep-seated racial pride. Though Hurston joined many White conservatives in opposing *Brown*, her reasons were altogether different, as was her distinctly Black brand of conservatism. Indeed, it was Black conservatives of the 1950s, not the decade's mainstream integrationist civil rights leadership, who in many ways were closer to the more militant Black Nationalists of the 1960s in their joint emphasis on Black self-determination and a racial pride that rejected integration as a cure-all.

By focusing on conservative Black women during the civil rights era, this chapter highlights the myriad of political ideologies that have always existed within Black communities. This diversity of political expression, however, has not always been fully

[1] Zora Neale Hurston, "Court Order Can't Make Races Mix," *Orlando Sentinel*, August 11, 1955.
[2] Ibid.

delineated by scholars. Almost all of the leading scholarship of the conservative movement that arose in the 1960s ignores Black conservatives completely, and treats conservatism as a lily-white phenomenon.[3] Similarly, more specific accounts of conservative women focus exclusively on White women, and the few accounts of Black conservatives since the 1980s have almost exclusively centered on Black men like Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.[4]

However, as Christopher Alan Bracey, a Black law professor and self-described "liberal," has noted, "the failure to appreciate Black conservatism as a bona fide intellectual movement has particularly tragic consequences."[5] In addition to marginalizing active historical agents, ignoring those on the peripheries of Black thought has the effect of turning Black politics into a monolithic force that minimizes its rich complexities on both the Left and Right. Hanes Walton Jr. notes that this predominant narrative of Black politics "is a static one. It paints Black party supporters as robots, unthinking and under numerous sociopsychological controls."[6] By focusing on conservative Black women, we add nuance to the literature on both Black politics and the rise of conservatism during the volatile 1950s and 1960s.

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[3] Thomas Edsall with Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1991); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Matthew Dallek, *The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan's First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Allan Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2008).

[4] Rebecca Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Marjorie J. Spruill, "Gender and America's Right Turn," in Bruce Schulman and Julian Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Joseph Conti and Brad Stetson, *Challenging the Civil Rights Establishment: Profiles of a New Black Vanguard* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993.

[5] Christopher Alan Bracey, *Saviors or Sellouts: The Promise and Peril of Black Conservatism, from Booker T. Washington to Condoleezza Rice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), xviii-xix.

[6] Hanes Walton Jr., *Invisible Politics: Black Political Behavior* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 137.

There have always existed elements of conservatism within Black politics.[7] Most historians point to Booker T. Washington as the quintessential Black conservative. Rather than directly challenging the rise of segregation in the 1890s South, Washington took up the Jim Crow rhetoric of "separate but equal," arguing that "in all things purely social" Whites and Blacks "can be as separate as the fingers." Indeed, to Washington, segregation was a system that Black educators, businessmen, and community leaders could work from the inside for the advancement of Black communities. It was the segregated state of Alabama, after all, that provided state funding for Washington's Tuskegee Institute (a school run by African Americans for African Americans). It was also segregation that provided a space in almost every Southern city for the formation of thriving Black business districts. As head of both Tuskegee and the National Negro Business League, Washington emphasized a distinctly conservative notion of self-help centered on the middle-class ideals of the value of hard work, individual initiative, personal responsibility ("pull yourself up by your own bootstraps"), capitalism, and entrepreneurship.[8]

Many of Washington's ideas were taken up by Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in the 1920s. Though not as deferential to Whites in his rhetoric as Washington, Garvey also stressed the importance of Black ownership, joining Washington in deemphasizing integration as the ultimate goal of Black Americans. Firmly committed to free enterprise, the UNIA operated, or helped fund, thousands of small Black-owned businesses across the country. And, rather than supporting integrated public

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[7] Deborah Toler, "Black Conservatives," in Chip Berlet, ed., *Eyes Right: Challenging the Right Wing Backlash* (Boston: South End Press, 1995), 294; Akwasi B. Assensoh and Yvette Alex-Assensoh, "Black Political Leadership in the Post-Civil Rights Era," in Ollie A. Johnson III and Karin Stanford, eds., *Black Political Organization in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 200; Peter Eisenstadt, "Introduction," in Peter Eisenstadt, ed., *Black Conservatism: Essays in Intellectual and Political History* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), xii-xiii; Lewis A. Randolph, "Black Neoconservatives in the United States: Responding with Progressive Coalitions," in James Jennings, ed., *Race and Politics: New Challenges and Responses for Black Activism* (London: Verso, 1997), 149.

[8] Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 125, 229.

school systems in Northern cities, the UNIA urged urban Black families to send their children to Black-operated schools, whose curriculum would focus on Pan-African history and practical vocational training. Unlike integration, which Garvey believed was underpinned by internalized racism that implicitly accepted an inherent superiority of White spaces, a thriving network of Black-owned businesses and schools would foster Black pride and self-determination.[9]

Garvey's brand of Black Nationalism would later be reflected in the Nation of Islam, which similarly emphasized capitalist enterprise and racial pride in its support of Black ownership of businesses and schools. The Nation of Islam also held to a traditionally conservative set of gender and family norms that had clearly delineated roles for men, "breadwinners" and "protectors" of their families, and women, whose role was to support "their man" from inside the home. Labeled by one scholar as "the Negro version of the radical right," the Nation of Islam adamantly rejected abortion rights. Its largest publication, *Muhammad Speaks*, published cartoons of birth control pill bottles marked with a skull and crossbones, and lambasted feminists as proponents of Black "genocide."[10]

ZORA NEALE HURSTON AND RADICAL INDIVIDUALISM

Though a well-known author of the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston shifted her focus toward politics in the 1940s. In 1946, she joined actress and singer Etta Moten and

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[9] Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[10] Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); David Riesman, "The Intellectuals and the Discontented Classes: Some Further Reflections—1962," in Daniel Bell, ed., *The Radical Right: The New American Right*, expanded edition (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1963), 118; Loretta J. Ross, "African-American Women and Abortion: 1800-1970," in Stanlie M. James and Abena P.A. Busia, eds., *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 153.

famed pianist May Lou Williams in opposing the re-election of Harlem's Democratic congressman, Adam Clayton Powell. Chief among her decision to endorse the Black Republican candidate, Grant Reynolds, was perceived communist support for Powell. Hurston used her influence and connections in Harlem to secure financial support for Reynolds, and even worked in the trenches licking envelopes and passing out Republican pamphlets. Though Reynolds lost, the election was the closest of Powell's twenty-five year career.[11]

Like *Pittsburgh Courier* journalist George Schuyler, perhaps the most well-known Black conservative of the 1940s-60s, who wrote multiple anti-communist pieces for the *National Review*, Hurston generally approved of the anti-communism of the early Cold War.[12] Similar to White libertarians Isabel Paterson and Rose Wilder Land, Hurston's writings emphasized an extreme commitment to individualism and self-reliance.[13] According to Hurston biographer Robert Hemenway, with the rise of anti-communist hysteria in the 1950s, Hurston's "obsessive individualism" morphed into a "mild paranoia" against perceived communist infiltration of American politics. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Hurston criticized government welfare programs and called for the dismantling of the New Deal infrastructure.[14] Hurston's fierce individualism could be seen decades prior in her ground-breaking essay "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," a celebration of her all-Black, segregated hometown of Eatonville, Florida, and her own feminist identity that flourished despite White society's attempts to define her. Hurston's essay is a celebration of not just her identity as a proud, Black, Southern woman, but of herself as an individual. When White men discriminated against her, she didn't want to protest to make them

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[11] Valerie Boyd, *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 382-383; Robert Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 303; Carla Kaplan, ed., *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 441; Wil Haygood, *King of the Cats: The Life and Times of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.* (New York: Amistad, 2006), 141.

[12] Eisenstadt, "Introduction," xxii.

[13] David Beito and Linda Royster Beito, "Isabel Paterson, Rose Wilder Land, and Zora Neale Hurston on War, Race, the State and Liberty," *Independent Review*, 12:12 (Spring 2008), 553.

[14] Hemenway, 329.

accept her, but rather it was *they* who were negatively impacted: "How *can* any deny themselves the pleasure of my company? It's beyond me." The ultimate goal of communism, equality, per Hurston, would only bring *her*, "the cosmic Zora," down to earth like everyone else.[15]

Hurston allied herself most closely with the archconservative Senator Robert Taft of Ohio, the author of the infamous Taft-Hartley Act that placed unions under federal regulation. During the 1952 Republican primary, she became Taft's most vocal Black supporter, favoring him over the party's moderate favorite, Dwight Eisenhower. After she wrote an anti-communist article featured in the American Legion's monthly magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post* offered Hurston $1,000 to write an article laying out her conservative politics. In addition to stating her approval of the Taft-Hartley Act, Hurston argued that the New Deal's "relief program was the biggest weapon ever placed in the hands of those who sought power and votes." She continued, claiming that because of such welfare programs, Black men became "dependent upon the Government for their daily bread" and ultimately became servants "to the will of the 'Little White Father.'"[16]

Like many White conservatives, Hurston believed that accepting a government "dole" was demeaning toward one's dignity. A product of the radical pride generated by the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston was particularly sensitive to any policy that she believed lessened the dignity and self-respect of African Americans. Her fierce anti-communism stemmed from the same source. While she opposed Jim Crow laws and legalized discrimination—which were affronts to Black dignity—she placed her most vehement hatred on communism, which she believed threatened the individuality and self-reliance that was critical to Black identity. This emphasis on self-determination, with its roots in the early twentieth century in the ideas espoused by Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey, was characteristic of many Black conservatives in the 1950s and 1960s.

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[15] Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," in Alice Walker, ed., *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing…and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader* (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1979), 152-155.

[16] Zora Neale Hurston, "A Negro Voter Sizes Up Taft," *Saturday Evening* Post, December 8, 1951, 150-152; Kaplan, 612-613; Boyd, 411; Hemenway, 335; Beito, 570.

This standpoint was also at the root of her opposition to *Brown v. Board of Education*. She believed the court's claim that Black schools were inferior to their White counterparts was a direct attack on the Black community itself. "The whole matter revolves around the self-respect of my people," Hurston wrote in a letter published in the *Orlando Sentinel*. She further stated, "I regard the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court as insulting," particularly its claim that separating Black children from Whites "generates a feeling of inferiority." Drawing on the ideas of Marcus Garvey, which many Black Nationalists would also later employ in the 1960s, Hurston argued that "there are adequate Negro schools and prepared instructors" in many Black neighborhoods, and to suggest that White schools were inherently superior made the decision "insulting rather than honoring my race." Unlike many White conservatives who opposed the decision on the basis of racist fears of integration, Hurston's racial pride and strict adherence to Black self-help were the driving forces behind her opposition to *Brown*.[17]

Hurston was not the only Black conservative woman on the national stage during the 1950s. Thalia Thomas, the assistant chief of the Republican National Committee's Minorities Division, traveled over 100,000 miles across the country touting the virtues of the Grand Old Party throughout the decade.[18] Another was North Carolina Central University professor Helen Edmonds. With a PhD in History from the Ohio State University and as the first Black woman to become dean of a graduate school, Edmonds was one of the most well-known and published Black historians of the 1950s. Like Hurston, Edmonds' scholarship was rooted in her firm belief in Black dignity and self-reliance, and her numerous books emphasized the contributions of Black men and women to the development of American history.[19]

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[17] Zora Neale Hurston, "Court Order Can't Make Races Mix," *Orlando Sentinel*, August 11, 1955; Kaplan, 611; Boyd, 423-4; Hemenway, 336.
[18] Charles Thomas and Frances Shattuck, *The 1956 Presidential Campaign* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1960), 239; "Ticker Tape U.S.A.," *Jet*, January 29, 1959, 11.
[19] Helen Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894-1901* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951); Helen Edmonds, *Black Faces in High Places: Negroes in Government* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).

BLACK CONSERVATIVE WOMEN IN THE 1950S AND 1960S

Edmonds became the first Black woman to second the nomination of a presidential candidate when she appeared before the Republican National Convention in San Francisco to endorse Eisenhower in 1956.[20] The speech was made possible by the diligence of the president's highest ranking Black staffer, E. Frederic Morrow, who convinced his party to place her in a prominent position in the nationally televised convention proceedings.[21] Though some believed it would help soften the image of the party with Black voters, some White Republicans were vocal in their opposition to the selection. Edmonds' home-state, all-White delegation from North Carolina was adamant in its disapproval, telling Eisenhower officials that it would lead to the defeat of the state's only Republican congressman in the upcoming elections, who needed the votes of racist Whites.[22]

After the convention, Edmonds became one of the Republican Party's most demanded Black speakers throughout the rest of the campaign. One field operative told party bosses that the reaction to her speech was so positive that the Republican National Committee (RNC) should request that she conduct tours across the country on behalf of Eisenhower.[23] Over the course of the fall, Edmonds traveled more than 10,000 miles, delivered over fifty speeches, and participated in numerous television and radio

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[20] Pero Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 122-123.
[21] Morrow Diary, "Republican National Convention 1956," Folder: Diary – E. Frederic Morrow (2), Box 2, E. Frederic Morrow Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library; David Nichols, *A Matter of Justice: Eisenhower and the Beginning of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 136.
[22] Drew Pearson, "Washington Merry-Go-Round," *Gadsden Times* (Alabama), August 26, 1956.
[23] "Eight Who Made Seconding Talks Represent Cross-Section of Eisenhower Backers," *New York Times*, August 23, 1956; Letter, Val Washington to Helen Edmonds, 30 August 1956, Folder: Correspondence. Republican Nat'l Committee, 1953-1956 expense accounts and itinerants, Box 2, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

interviews.[24] During an October tour of Pennsylvania, she gave eleven speeches, including an appearance before an audience of over 1,000 White women in Bethlehem. For the rest of the month through Election Day, she conducted campaign stops throughout the Midwest and East Coast.[25] In light of Edmonds' service to his campaign, Eisenhower appointed her as a United Nations alternate delegate in 1958. During her tenure, which included numerous trips to Europe and Africa, Edmonds' public remarks centered on two issues: anti-communism and Black civil rights.[26]

Though it ignored African Americans, a 1963 study of the emergence of the "Radical Right" by Seymour Lipset argued that women were "much more likely" to oppose communism than men and that many of the leading organizations active in local anti-communist efforts were led by women.[27] While Lipset's focus was exclusively on White America, Black women like Zora Neale Hurston and Helen Edmonds joined other conservative women of the era, like Phyllis Schlafly, in embracing an adamant anti-communist philosophy.[28] And while they opposed Jim Crow, communism was an equally unsavory philosophy because it would take away the individuality and self-determination that had long provided a source of strength and dignity to Black communities.

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[24] Letter, Helen Edmonds to Allen James Low, December 15, 1956, Folder: Correspondence. Republican National Committee. Letter from Rank and File Persons During and Following Dr. Edmonds Campaign Tour, 1956, Box 2, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.
[25] Letter, Helen Edmonds to Val Washington, October 23, 1956, Folder: Correspondence. Republican Nat'l Committee, 1953-1956 expense accounts and itineraries, Box 2, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.
[26] Letter, Helen Edmonds to Robert Grey, September 20, 1957, Folder: Correspondence. White House and the Executive Dept. of the U.S. Government, 1957, Box 2, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University; Parker, *The History of The Links,* 24.
[27] Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Sources of the 'Radical Right'—1955," in Daniel Bell, ed., *The Radical Right: The New American Right*, expanded edition (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1963), 303.
[28] Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 62-3.

In 1960, Edmonds returned to the campaign circuit, becoming North Carolina's co-chair of Women for Nixon-Lodge.[29] Her enthusiasm was far less than it had been four years prior. Edmonds complained throughout the fall that Richard Nixon's "stupidly run" campaign failed to make any efforts to utilize Black Republicans such as herself.[30] In private correspondence, she argued that Republicans lost because they never created a rival to John F. Kennedy's "window-dressing" division of Civil Rights Advisors.[31] Edmonds was also critical of the "absence of any relationship whatsoever" between local Black women and the North Carolina State Federation of Republican Women, which she complained was a segregated institution.[32] This episode reveals a critical divergence between Black and White conservatives throughout the civil rights era. Though they may have been opposed to New Deal programs or actively participated in the fight against communism, most Black conservatives were not allies with White conservatives.

A series of exchanges between Helen Edmonds and various leaders of the *National Review*, a prominent conservative magazine, is particularly revealing. In the late 1950s, Edmonds received a form letter from the magazine that repeated common racist tropes against civil rights, stating that "every thinking Southerner owes it to the way of life we hold sacred" to subscribe to the "only Northern magazine that *consistently* upholds Southern liberties." It also touted a recent endorsement by the rabid segregationist Alabama congressman, Frank W. Boykin. An outraged Edmonds responded to William F. Buckley Jr., the magazine's publisher and leading conservative ideologue through the

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[29] "North Carolina," n.d., Folder: Alphabetical Files. Political Material. Addresses, Reports, Memoranda, etc., of the Republican Nat'l Comte, 1960-1961, Box 1, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

[30] Letter, Val Washington to Helen Edmonds, December 6, 1960, Folder: Correspondence. Republican Party, 1959-60, Box 2, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

[31] Letter, Helen Edmonds to "Mrs. Charles Dean Jr.," November 29, 1960, Folder: Correspondence. Republican Party, 1959-60, Box 2, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

[32] Letter, Helen Edmonds to Claire Williams, January 24, 1961, Folder: Correspondence. Republican Party, 1961-1976, Box 2, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

1980s, writing that "I cannot wish your magazine success. I wish no instrument of mass communication success which sets one class of citizen apart from another, and grants the majority class rights and privileges solely on the basis of the color of their skin." The curt and condescending reply from Buckley's sister, Maureen, simply stated her "deep sadness" over Edmonds' "emotionalism" and lamented the "impossibility of discussing the segregation issue rationally" with Black women. As a Black woman who supported the end of segregation in the South, Edmonds—regardless of her conservative credentials—was dismissed by a leading conservative ideologue in the same fashion as other, more liberal, African Americans. Indeed, while Edmonds remained a vocal Republican through the 1980s, she was never accepted by the leading intellectual leaders of the emerging White conservative movement.[33]

During the late 1960s, Edmonds continued to differ with White conservatives on issues of race. By 1968, in the wake of the increasingly militant responses of young African Americans, White conservatives rallied around the central theme of "law and order." Phyllis Schlafly, for example, blamed "riots" on "various civil-rights and New Left groups saturated by Communists," and called for the arrests of Black Nationalists H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael.[34] Edmonds, on the other hand, recognized that "crime is a problem everywhere," but, rather than placing blame on African Americans, she argued that its roots were found in high unemployment. Instead of targeting Black militants, she called for "a sensible program to help ex-convicts find employment."[35]

Apart from her opposition to the overtly racist appeals of the White conservative movement, however, Edmonds sometimes mirrored its rhetoric during the 1960s on other issues. Following the uproar over Daniel Patrick Moynihan's report that blamed many

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[33] Charles Randolph to "Friend," n.d., Letter, Helen Edmonds to William F. Buckley Jr., November 1, 1957, and Maureen Buckley to Helen Edmonds, November 19, 1957, all in Folder: Correspondence. General 1951-1959, Box 1, Edmonds Papers.
[34] Carol Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority: The Biography of Phyllis Schlafly* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1981), 207-208.
[35] Helen Edmonds, *Blacks Have Been Too Long in the Hip-pocket of One Major Political Party*, October 29, 1972, Folder: Alphabetical Files. Political Material. NC Republican Party, 1951-76, Box 1, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

problems in the Black community on the "failure" of the Black family, Edmonds argued that Black "sociologists do not like Monyhan's [sic] writings and findings but they bear great truth." Discussing "our Negro unemployed," she emphasized personal responsibility and self-help, contending that "some are underlings because they do not want to avail themselves of the possibilities of all training which is presently offered." Moreover, she claimed that Lyndon Johnson's anti-poverty programs did not do anything but teach young African Americans "to go out into the community and raise the devil." In further reflection of her conservative, middle class sensibilities, she also believed liberals encouraged activists to "stand on the doorsteps of the mayors' offices with these non-negotiable demands, organize tenants not to pay rent, or welfare mothers to sustain their demands."[36]

It is important to note, however, that her remarks in support of Moynihan's memo blaming Black unemployment on Blacks themselves were written in a private letter to another Black Republican from North Carolina, Nixon advisor Robert J. Brown. Regarding her *public* remarks on civil rights, law and order, and "the race problem," Edmonds was always careful not to use the same racially charged rhetoric as her White conservative counterparts. In private conversations with other African Americans, the self-help tradition that informed much of her ideology was more explicit in its criticisms of Blacks themselves. Indeed, introspective critiques of African Americans played a significant role in the rhetoric of Black Nationalists from Marcus Garvey to Malcolm X. Edmonds' criticisms, however, were never apparent in her public statements or conversations with White conservatives. Maintaining Black dignity tempered her public statements regarding Black life and culture.

Political scientist Lewis A. Randolph suggests that while Black conservatives may have leaned right on matters outside of Jim Crow, most Black conservatives were in the Black mainstream in their embrace of the goals of the civil rights movement. The

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[36] Letter, Helen Edmonds to Robert Brown, December 4, 1969, Folder: Correspondence. White House and the Executive Dept. of the U.S. Government, 1959-1969, Box 2, Helen Edmonds Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

movement, particularly during its nonviolent, integrationist phase of the 1950s and early 1960s, was predominantly led by the Black middle class, was saturated with traditional religious undertones, and played to middle class moral sensibilities that made it easy for Black conservatives to embrace its goals. Helen Edmonds frequently, and publicly, stated her support for the end of legalized segregation and other forms of overt racism.[37]

Edmonds' rhetoric against the War on Poverty and denunciations against militants in the mid-to-late 1960s placed her clearly on the right of the political spectrum. However, as her experience with the *National Review* demonstrated, her opposition to legalized racial inequality in the South placed her outside of the emerging White conservative movement. Moreover, unlike many White conservatives, Edmonds refused to partake in anything she viewed as anti-Black. While she remained a conservative throughout the rest of her life, there remained tension between her politics and what she perceived as overt racism within the emerging White conservative movement.

Such was the case with many Black Republicans as the party embraced the father of modern conservatism, Barry Goldwater, in the 1964 presidential election. While a few Black conservatives like George Schuyler joined Goldwater and other White conservatives in opposing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, most split with their party in that year's elections.[38] So far had African Americans been driven out of the party, a 1964 RNC pamphlet highlighting the party's Black staff featured only secretaries and mail room/printing office staff.[39] Elaine Jenkins, who attended the 1964 Republican convention in San Francisco, recalled that the experience "was lonely and uncomfortable." She

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[37] Randolph, "Black Neoconservatives in the United States," 150.

[38] Schuyler was eventually fired in 1964 after he endorsed Goldwater, and he subsequently joined the John Birch Society. George Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 1, 1964; George Schuyler, "The Case Against the Civil Rights Bill," in Jeffrey Leak, ed., *Rac[e]ing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 97; Maria Diedrich, "George S. Schuyler's *Black No More*—The Black Conservative's Socialist Past," *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 12:1 (1988), 55.

[39] Republican National Committee, "Who is George Lewis?," April 1964, Folder: Republican Party and the South: *Negro Vote*, Box 47, Records of the Democratic National Committee (Series I), Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

complained that "There was *no* inclusion of Black Republicans," and that "White staffers treated the few of us present as truly non-existent."[40]

BLACK CAPITALISM AND CONSERVATIVE STRAINS OF BLACK POWER

Two years after the nomination of Barry Goldwater, Black Power arose as a dominant theme in Black politics. While popular (mis)conceptions today view Black Power as exclusively a movement of the Left, it brought with it a resurgence of conservative Black Nationalism reminiscent of Marcus Garvey.[41] During the mid-to-late 1960s, a new generation of Black conservatives (and Black Leftists) took up the banners of self-determination and self-reliance, and turned away from the prevailing liberal emphasis on integration as the solution to Black advancement.[42] Floyd McKissick and Roy Innis of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the group that had previously organized the Freedom Rides, were influential in turning the organization toward conservative Black Nationalism. Under their leadership, CORE stressed the need to create Black owned businesses, called for autonomous, Black-run school districts, and called Black men and women to look toward themselves, not the White-dominated federal government, for uplift.[43]

Surprisingly, some White conservatives also believed that Black Nationalism could be used to make inroads for the Republican Party in traditionally Democratic neighborhoods. The *National Review* declared in 1967 that "hard work and self-discipline" were the keys to Black economic betterment, and praised Booker T. Washington for teaching that "respect and access to jobs must be earned by the Negroes themselves."[44]

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[40] Elaine Brown Jenkins, *Jumping Double Dutch: A New Agenda for Blacks and the Republican Party* (Silver Spring, MD: Beckham House Publishers, 1996), 25-26.
[41] Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, eds., *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 373.
[42] Bracey, 103, 110.
[43] Marable and Mullings, 373; Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), 277.
[44] George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 282.

Clarence Townes, head of the RNC's Minorities Division, emphasized to his White colleagues that "never before has the Negro community been more insistent upon self-determination; and the Minorities Division presents the Republican philosophy to the Negro community's leadership in this light."[45] This notion of "Black capitalism" and self-reliance would also become the centerpiece of Richard Nixon's Black strategy in 1968 and during his subsequent terms in office.

As a presidential candidate in 1968, Nixon led his party to embrace what he termed "Black capitalism." During a campaign radio address Nixon put forth his proposal to increase government support for Black-owned businesses. He attempted to pacify the concerns of White listeners by suggesting that "much of the Black militant talk these days is actually in terms far closer to the doctrines of free enterprise than to those of the welfarist '30s" in their usage of the "terms of 'pride,' 'ownership,' private enterprise,' 'capital,' 'self-assurance,' [and] 'self-respect.'" Nixon further argued that new emphasis should be placed on "Black ownership," and promised a new age of Black Power "in the best…constructive sense of that often misapplied term." If African American communities controlled their own small businesses and had local control of their own schools, then the country would see a "rebirth of pride and individualism and independence." This rhetoric appealed to not only many Whites, including South Carolina's Strom Thurmond, who found comfort in its emphasis on self-reliance and de-emphasis on integration, but it also nearly mirrored the same language used by many Black conservatives. Nixon, according to James Farmer, the former leader of the Freedom Rides who later accepted a position in Nixon's administration, commended the presidential candidate's "supreme act of co-optation" in taking up the banner of Black Nationalism.[46]

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[45] Speech by Clarence Townes before the Republican Big City County Chairman's Workshop in Washington, DC, March 23, 1968, Clarence L. Townes Jr. Papers, Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University.

[46] Nixon for President Committee, "'Bridges to Human Dignity': An Address by Richard M. Nixon on the CBS Radio Network," April 25, 1968, Folder: Nixon, Richard M., 1968 (1), Box 14, Special Name Series, DDE: Post-Presidential Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library; Dean Kotlowski, *Nixon's Civil Rights: Politics, Principle, and Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 38; Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of*

Black capitalism became a policy reality on March 5, 1969, when President Nixon signed Executive Order 11458, establishing the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE), which had the explicit goal of encouraging and funding Black businesses. Upon signing the order, Nixon proclaimed his hope that these businesses would "encourage pride, dignity, and a sense of independence" throughout Black communities.[47] Though its initial budget was only $1.2 million, by 1972 its funding had increased to $43.5 million, and in 1973 to $63.5 million.[48]

Civil rights scholar Belinda Robnett has suggested that "the change to a Black Power philosophy also brought the development of a hierarchy and fewer spaces for women's leadership," as hypermasculinity and paternalistic gender norms plagued many nationalist organizations.[49] Tellingly, the first national Black Power conference in Newark (1967) approved an anti-birth control resolution, and the newsletter condemned Planned Parenthood's support of "Black genocidal politics."[50] A closer examination of the conservative faction of Black Nationalism reveals the active participation of many women. For instance, Mary Van Buren, running on a platform centered on Black capitalism, received the endorsement of Indianapolis's Republican establishment in her 1972 run for state senator.[51] In 1971, the OMBE sponsored its first National Conference on Business

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Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North (New York: Random House, 2008), 429-430.

[47] Robert Weems Jr. with Lewis A. Randolph, *Business in Black and White: American Presidents and Black Entrepreneurs in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 127; Jonathan Bean, *Big Government and Affirmative Action: The Scandalous History of the Small Business Administration* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 72-73; Sugrue, 442-3; Kotlowski, 134.

[48] Weems, 227.

[49] Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 180.

[50] Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 235; Ross, 153.

[51] "Prominent GOP Candidate to Attend Minority Women Meet," *Indianapolis Recorder*, June 10, 1972.

Opportunities for Black women.[52] Gloria Toote, the granddaughter of Garvey associate Frederick Toote and an economic advisor for Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan, used her influence in all three administrations to promote increased government expenditures for Black businesses.[53] Similarly, Elaine Jenkins emphasized that "the root of Black entrepreneurship is in the Black community" and criticized traditional liberal Black leadership for failing to support the development of Black businesses. As an influential member of the Republican National Committee from the 1960s through 1980s, she was adamant in her support for the maintenance of party's Black capitalism platform.[54]

Jewel Rogers-Lafontant, who was also active in business circles and served in the Nixon administration, vigorously pressed the OMBE to include Black women in its funding. A board member of Trans World Airlines (TWA), Rogers-Lafontant told the Republican Platform Committee in 1972 that "a primary goal" of the party should be to direct funding to women and encourage the "stimulation of minority enterprise."[55] Rogers-Lafontant, like many Black conservative women, was from the upper-middle class; her father, Francis Stradford, was one of the wealthiest Black lawyers in America during the 1930s. After becoming the first Black woman admitted to the Chicago Bar Association, Rogers-Lafontant became a partner in her father's firm by the 1960s and served as the national secretary of the National Bar Association.[56]

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[52] Clipping, "Women's Confab in Session at Washington, D.C.," n.d., Folder: Administration Initiatives Receiving Top Coverage in Minority Publications, 11/3/71, Box 1, Stanley S. Scott Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.
[53] Gloria Toote, "Black Political Power," in J. Clay Smith Jr., ed., *Rebels in Law: Voices in History of Black Women Lawyers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 169-170; Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, updated edition (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 151; "Gloria E.A. Toote," in Jessie Carney Smith, ed., *Notable Black American Women, Book II* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1996), 653.
[54] Helena Carney Lambeth, "Elaine B. Jenkins," in Smith, ed., *Notable Black American Women*, 331.
[55] Andrew Malcolm, "New Face Enters the Boardroom," *New York Times*, September 10, 1972; "Bring Minorities Into Mainstream, GOP Told," *Jet*, August 31, 1972, 7.
[56] "Lady Lawyers," *Jet*, January 22, 1953, 15; Lawrence Otis Graham, *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper-Class* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 194; J. Clay Smith Jr., *Rebels in Law: Voices in History of Black Women Lawyers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 307.

The membership of The Links Incorporated, a prominent social club headed by Black conservatives Helen Edmonds and Marjorie Parker with chapters across the country, was comprised almost exclusively of middle class Black women. Most Links members were either high-profile college educators or the wives of physicians, attorneys, and businessmen. Per a 1966 report, the average Links member was over fifty years old and had at least four years of college education. Forty-seven percent had master's degrees. According to Parker, who, like Edmonds, was also an influential college professor, The Links was formed in the 1940s to address the "ambivalence toward the Black professional class" from White society. "Many avenues of status, fellowship, and service were closed to women of the class," according to Parker, whose goal was to promote the careers and causes of upper class Black women.[57] While The Links would advocate some of the same ideals as conservative White women—particularly in its anticommunism and opposition to government welfare—the group's focus was to provide social and political advancement for upper-middle class Black women. Relying on an ideology of self-help reminiscent of Booker T. Washington, many conservative Black women focused on their own advancement through entrepreneurship and expanded business opportunities. Unlike many conservative White women who often opposed the increased presence of women in the workplace, their Black counterparts in The Links wholeheartedly embraced Black capitalism as the means to obtain their goal of self-advancement.

Though celebrated in middle class Black magazines like *Jet* and *Ebony*, the "Black capitalism" initiatives of the late 1960s were widely denounced by the Black Nationalist Left. Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver called the Black bourgeoisie "puppets" of colonialists who promised them a "vested interest in the capitalist system."[58] The militant publication *Soulbook* referred to conservative Black Nationalism as "cullud nationalism," and concluded that "their seeming militancy…can only be interpreted as 'loud-mouth' conservatism." It further accused them of siding with "right-wing 'Beasts'" when they

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[57] Parker, *The History of The Links*, xv, 18.
[58] "Eldridge Cleaver Discusses Revolution: An Interview from Exile," October 1969, in Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 108-109.

praised "Whitey's so-called 'free enterprize [sic],' chiefly in order to bolster their own position in racist, U.S. 'society.'"[59]

Black capitalism also drew little praise from mainstream liberal civil rights leaders, who argued that full economic and social integration, not separation, was the key to Black advancement.[60] Bayard Rustin complained that Black capitalism's adherents "are not progressive" and "let both the federal government and the White community off the hook" by placing the burden of advancement solely on Blacks themselves.[61] One of the fiercest criticisms of Black (and White) conservative self-help came from Martin Luther King Jr., who in the midst of his 1968 Poor People's Campaign, noted, "It is a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he should lift himself up by his own bootstraps." Conservative emphasis on self-help and Black capitalism ignored fundamental structural inequalities, King pronounced, "it is even worse to tell a man to lift himself up by his own bootstraps when somebody is standing on the boot." And while Black conservatives from Zora Neale Hurtson to the Black businesswomen of the 1960s emphasized a fierce individualism that lay at the heart of capitalistic entrepreneurship, King emphasized communal responsibility and his firm belief that "nobody else in this country has lifted themselves by their own bootstraps alone, so why expect the Black man to do it?"[62]

From OMBE's inception, middle-class business women were involved in promoting, and personally receiving, increased benefits from the program. Every Black woman, according to Elaine Jenkins, "dreams of having all the opportunities that a White man or woman would have," and argued that under President Nixon, "Black business thrived."[63] Jenkins, who was deeply involved with the Republican National Committee during the late 1960s and whose father founded the first Black business school at Wilberforce University,

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[59] Ernie Allen, "Black Nationalism on the Right," *Soulbook*, 1:1 (Winter 1964), 8, 13.
[60] Kotlowski, 132.
[61] Bayard Rustin, "Negroes and the 1968 Elections," in *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 251.
[62] Martin Luther King Jr., "Local 1199, New York City, March 10, 1968," in Michael K. Honey, ed., *All Labor Has Dignity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011).
[63] Carol Morton, "Black Women in Corporate America," *Ebony*, November 1975, 112; Jenkins, *Jumping Double Dutch,* 42.

was herself a beneficiary of Black capitalism. Founded in 1970, Jenkins' business consulting firm, One America, Inc., became one of the top one hundred Black-owned businesses within three years.[64]

As Jenkins' success story illustrates in critical ways, the Left's criticisms of Black capitalists bore truths. Many supporters of Black capitalism were members of the Black bourgeoisie and were more than willing to accept government funding to help develop their own businesses—at the same time they were critical of "welfare dependency" among working class African Americans. On the other hand, because of the lack of capital in Black communities and discrimination by banks in granting loans, government assistance was a needed variable in growing the number of Black-owned businesses. When it served their needs, many Black conservatives were more than willing to embrace a system of government assistance that was essential to the expansion of Black businesses.

Not all Black capitalism supporters, however, relied on government assistance in forming their own business ventures. Cora T. Walker was a prominent conservative Black Nationalist in Harlem during the 1960s who held fast to a strict interpretation of self-determination apart from federal assistance. Walker, who made headlines in the 1940s after she became one of the first Black women admitted to the New York State Bar, was also a lifelong Republican. Running as the party's candidate in a 1964 state senate race, Walker's campaign emphasized self-help and was highly critical of what she described as welfare dependency. Catryna Seymour, a Walker supporter, praised her "courage" for being "outspoken in urging Negroes to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps."[65] Walker further solidified her conservative credentials by opposing busing, arguing that

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[64] "The Negro: Whether Ward Healer or U.S.," *Ebony*, August 1966, 97; Lambeth, 330-1; Morton, 108.

[65] "Cora Walker Pushing Bid for 21st Senatorial Seat," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 18, 1964; Catryna Seymour, letter to editor, *New York Times*, November 2, 1964; "Black Profile," *Sacramento Observer*, May 14, 1970; "Cora T. Walker, Pioneering Female New York Attorney, Succumbs at 84," *Jet*, August 7, 2006, 35; "Cora Walker, 84, Dies," *New York Times*, July 20, 2006; Constance Baker Motley, *Equal Justice Under Law: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 206; Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 24.

residents of Harlem should maintain and attend their own separate schools. In 1972 she appeared alongside Senator James L. Buckley, who was recently elected on the Conservative Party ticket, on a slate of Republican National Convention delegates approved by the Manhattan Republican Organization.[66]

Prominently displaying a picture taken of her and Malcolm X in her home, Walker followed his lead as an unflinching advocate of Black self-determination, once telling a reporter that African Americans must "tell the young people that they must own. We must begin to own some of this real estate called Harlem." Leading by example, Walker started at the most basic level of need in any community. In 1967, she spearheaded the creation and opening of the first Black-owned supermarket in Harlem. The idea was born after she realized that all the grocery stores in Harlem were owned by Whites. According to Walker, "I felt that Black people needed to own a supermarket, too," and that a Black-owned business "served as an instrument to empowering the Black community." She wanted Black children who walked by it to say, "My mother and father are part owners of that supermarket."[67] Relying on the self-help tradition in its purest sense, Walker's co-op venture would be funded exclusively by Black investors from Harlem.

In 1968, Walker sold five dollar shares to 2,550 individual shareholders, and opened the 10,000-square-foot Harlem River Cooperative Supermarket. "I even tried to negotiate with the welfare department to allow welfare recipients to buy $5 shares," Walker recalled, but the agency refused. At its grand opening, one shopper remarked that the air-conditioned supermarket—which featured automatic doors, soft music, and fluorescent lighting—was "lovely" and that "you don't find this except in the suburbs." The store came under immediate attack, however, by Manhattan's Democratic borough president, Hulan Jack, and Joe Overton of the local food service union, who criticized Walker for hiring outside of the union. Walker argued that the $1.85 hourly wage paid to her employees was comparable to starting salaries for similar jobs in Harlem, and that

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[66] Thomas Ronan, "Buckley is Named as G.O.P. Delegate," *New York Times*, April 12, 1972; Biondi, 284.

[67] "A Great and Mighty Walk for Cora Walker," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 11, 1999.

union labor was too expensive if she wanted to "give quality food at fair prices." Within a year of the store's opening, Overton led an eighteen-month union picket outside the store's front door, in what he claimed was an attempt to unionize the business, not shut it down. Though investors eventually grew to almost 3,500 by 1969, after sustained protests, union boycotts, and numerous broken windows and other incidents of vandalism, the store closed its doors in April 1976.[68]

THE LEGACY OF BLACK CONSERVATIVE WOMEN

As seen in the story of Cora Walker, the legacy of Black capitalism was mixed. From 1970 to 1975, the number of Black-owned banks more than doubled from twenty-one to forty-five.[69] Moreover, by 1983 sixty-four of the one hundred largest Black corporations had been founded since 1970.[70] Between 1969 and 1972, the gross income of Black businesses increased from $4.5 billion to $7.5 billion. However, during this same period, Black businesses accounted for only 1.7 percent of the total income of all American businesses, and the *combined* total income of the one hundred largest Black-owned businesses still placed it behind 284 of *Fortune 500*'s list of America's largest corporations.[71] In many ways, despite the sincerity of the expressed devotion of

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[68] "Residents of Harlem Open Their Own Supermarket," *New York Times*, June 5, 1968; Rudy Johnson, "Harlem Market Thrives as Co-Op," *New York Times*, August 11, 1968; Richard Severo, "Overton, Harlem Leader, Main Figure in Strife at Cooperative Market," *New York Times*, November 13, 1970; "A Great and Mighty Walk for Cora Walker," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 11, 1999; Theodore L. Cross, *Black Capitalism: Strategy for Business in the Ghetto* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 43-44.
[69] Sean Dennis Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 228-229.
[70] Thomas D. Boston, *Race, Class and Conservatism* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 36.
[71] Peter Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: The Tragedy and Promise of America in the 1970s* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), 48; Cashman, 229.

conservative Black Nationalists to their community, their critics on the Black Left were correct. Black businessmen and women individually benefited from Black capitalism, but it failed to transform the American economic structure or uplift the Black working class.

Though Black capitalism was the central issue to most Black conservatives of the 1960s, many also advocated educational separatism as well. Cora T. Walker joined CORE in opposing busing in Harlem to achieve racial integration in public schools because—like Zora Neale Hurston's opposition to *Brown*—she believed it was insulting to suggest that White schools were "better" for Harlem's Black community. Instead, Walker and CORE endorsed a separate school system run independently by African Americans themselves. Many Black conservatives also played dominant roles in the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), which they saw as a means to promote self-determination. UNCF bolstered two foundational issues to many Black conservatives: Black schools offered Black communities an institution they could claim as their own, while also providing a venue for Black students to develop the skills necessary to contribute to their betterment through self-help. Founded in 1944, UNCF elected its first president, Frederick D. Patterson, who was a Republican and protégé of Booker T. Washington. In 1972, another Republican, Arthur Fletcher, who coined the phrase "a mind is a terrible thing to waste," became executive director of the organization. Under pressure from his Black conservative supporters, President Nixon nearly doubled federal funding for Black colleges. UNCF was also supported by conservative Black women like Helen Edmonds, who served on its national board, and other professors in The Links during the 1970s. Between 1960 and 1980, the majority of money raised by the organization's fundraisers was given to UNCF, totaling over $600,000 in donations.[72] As in their support for Black capitalism, Edmonds and The Links were driven by a desire to strengthen Black self-determination and racial pride in distinctly Black institutions. As a partial result of the efforts of UNCF, Black conservatives,

[72] Letter, Helen Edmonds to Gerald Ford, May 24, 1974, Folder: Black Leadership, Box 224, Gerald R. Ford Vice Presidential Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library; Parker, *The History of The Links*, 25, 89.

and the Nixon administration, enrollment in Black colleges grew 50 percent between 1969 and 1977.[73]

Black conservative women remained active in the party throughout the rest of the 1970s. Ethel Allen, a medical doctor, self-described "ghetto practitioner," and Republican since the 1950s, was drawn to the GOP's rigid view of "law and order" in the late 1960s. With her practice in a poor Philadelphia neighborhood, her office was frequently broken into and her primary clients were drug addicts. One day when she was making a house call, four men in the house attempted to mug her, assuming she carried drugs in her black medicine bag. Allen instead pulled out a handgun, forced the men to undress, and ordered the naked would-be robbers to the street before she walked away (her embrace of gun ownership and self-defense is another unexplored link by scholars between Black Nationalists and conservatives). Following this event, Allen ran for a city-wide office on a platform that promised to fight crime and send drug addicts out of the city "to places out West." After winning the election, she became the city's first Black councilwoman elected to an at-large seat.[74]

Allen remained a vocal conservative and important state Republican throughout the 1970s. A founding member of the Black Republican Women's National Alliance, she criticized White feminists for being "more concerned with burning bras, sexual promiscuity and who's on top in their relationships with men" than caring for "real" women's issues of economic empowerment.[75] In denouncing feminism, Allen used the same hyperbolic rhetoric as White conservative women like Phyllis Schlafly; however, like Helen Edmonds, Elaine Jenkins, and other Black conservatives, she wholeheartedly embraced Black capitalism, expanded entrepreneurial opportunities for Black women, and Nixon's attempts at welfare reform that guaranteed a minimum income. In 1974, she served as

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[73] Kotlowski, 154-5.
[74] Lezlie McCoy, "Dr. Ethel Allen: Philadelphia Politician, Physician and Advocate of the People," *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 18, 2003; "Dr. Allen's Newest Patient: The City of Philadelphia," *Ebony*, May 1973, 124, 128; "I've Learned to Survive," *Philadelphia Inquirer, Today* section, January 1976.
[75] "Dr. Allen's Newest Patient," 126.

vice chairman of the National Coordinating Council of Black Republicans.[76] Given her long affiliation with the local and national party, Allen become one of the most powerful Black women (of either party) in the country in 1979 when she was appointed Pennsylvania's Secretary of State. The position earned her a top-ten spot on *Esquire* magazine's list of the nation's most powerful women, a list that featured mostly Whites.[77]

Black conservative women remained a small, but vocal, group within the Republican Party into the 1980s. Inside the Ronald Reagan administration, conservative Black women continued to press their demands to party leaders. Kansas City businesswoman Inez Kaiser urged President Reagan to follow Nixon's example of "helping Black business people to keep money in their own neighborhoods."[78] Similarly, Elaine Jenkins formed the Council of 100 Black Republicans, a Washington-based organization made up of the upper-middle class that continued to advocate on behalf of Black businesswomen.[79] Gloria Toote served as a senior advisor for Ronald Reagan in 1980 and as vice chairman of his administration's Advisory Council on Private Sector Initiatives. During the campaign, she praised "Reagan's approach," and noted both she and the conservative icon "talk in terms of entrepreneurship and reducing welfare rolls."[80] Reagan also appointed Eileen Gardner, who worked for the conservative Heritage Foundation, to a high-ranking post in the Department of Education.[81] As they had in the 1960s and

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[76] Letter, Samuel C. Jackson to Gerald Ford, August 21, 1974, Folder: Black Republican (1), Box 5, Stanley S. Scott Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.
[77] "Two States Choose Black Women as Secretaries," *Ebony*, October 1979; "Dr. Ethel Allen Named to Penn. Cabinet Post," *Jet*, January 25, 1979, 78; McCoy, "Dr. Ethel Allen."
[78] Simeon Booker, "Ticker Tape U.S.A.," *Jet*, August 6, 1981, 11.
[79] "Black Republicans," *Black Enterprise*, August 1984, 67; "Black Republicans: What Makes Them Tick?," *Ebony*, August 1984, 74.
[80] James D. Williams, ed., *The State of Black America 1981* (New York: National Urban League, 1981), 299; "Blacks in Reagan's Cabinet?," *Columbus Times* (Georgia), November 13, 1980; "Black Women's Agenda Luncheon," *Washington Informer*, October 2, 1980.
[81] Eileen M. Gardner, ed., *A New Agenda for Education* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 1985).

1970s, these women brought with them a distinctly Black middle-class perspective, especially as it related to Black self-determination and business.

Though there were a number of Black conservatives active throughout the twentieth century, African Americans since the 1930s consistently provided the Democratic Party with one of its most stable voting blocs. On the presidential level, since 1964 African Americans have voted upwards of eighty (and oftentimes ninety) percent for the Democratic candidate. However, scholars are incorrect in their assumptions that "Black conservative politics was relatively inert during the Civil Rights period," or that "Black conservatives and the ideas they espoused had little demonstrable effect on the trajectory of American politics" during the 1960s.[82] Black conservatives of the 1960s were directly responsible for the massive federal programs that fell under the umbrella of "Black capitalism," which was rooted in the Black self-help tradition. By embracing Black capitalism, upper-middle-class Black women embraced a limited, but actualized, window of opportunity for individual advancement. Unlike White conservative women, who were opposed to such "affirmative action" programs designed to assist both African Americans and women, Black conservative women almost unanimously embraced the programs. Virtually no prominent Black conservative of the 1960s joined their White counterparts in calling for women to return to the domestic sphere. Black capitalism was by no means universally successful in advancing all upper-class Black women, let alone the Black community as a whole; rather, it was a vehicle that provided the social and economic advancement that created a small, powerful (and wealthy) cadre of conservative Black businesswomen like Elaine Jenkins and Jewel Rogers-Lafontant.

CONCLUSION

By explicitly ignoring conservative Black women in historical narratives of the 1960s, we implicitly argue against their existence as legitimate and distinct voices within both the Black community and the emerging conservative movement. Women from Zora Neale Hurston to Helen Edmonds to Cora T. Walker demonstrate that conservative thought

[82] Randolph, "Black Neoconservatives in the United States," 150; Bracey, ix.

existed throughout the Black community during the civil rights era. These women also demonstrate a counter-voice to the explicitly racist conservatism of the 1960s. While some of their rhetoric aligned with their White counterparts, the positions taken by these women were not simply mirror images of White conservatism; they were distinctly Black in their emphasis and origins. Conservative Black women in the civil rights era and beyond consistently emphasized the importance of Black business, self-determination, and a Booker T. Washingtonian "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" work ethic, as the keys to racial advancement. At a time when conservative White women hearkened back toward a nostalgic past and notion of traditional "motherhood," conservative Black women supported policies that furthered their presence in the business world. One could argue these women were naïve, that they served only the narrow interests of the Black bourgeoisie, or that they even helped White society preserve structural inequalities. Regardless, though they remained outside of mainstream Black politics and outside the parameters of White conservativism, they were active participants in the debates of their time.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways did Black conservative women and White conservative women differ?
2. What role did education play in the ideology of Black conservative women?
3. Why was Black capitalism so central to Black conservatism?
4. This essay focused on Black conservative definitions of self-determination. How might Black Leftists, such as the Black Panther Party, define the term differently?

Writing Prompt

Discuss the virtues and pitfalls of an integrationist approach to Black uplift versus the separatist approach of self-determination. Research one or two prominent Black conservative women today. In what ways are they similar and different to Black conservative women of the 1950s-1970s?

Chapter 13

The Origins of Africana Studies: A Brief History of a Scholar Activist Tradition

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Introduction

Born out of students' demand for a relevant education during the transitionary period between the modern Civil Rights era (1954-1965) and the Black Power era (1966-1975), Africana Studies is a discipline that emerged during one of the most radical moments in Africana history.[1] Impatient with the pace with which European-Americans accepted that Africana women, men, and children were deserving of full integration in all areas of American society, students and faculty at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) and predominantly white institutions (PWI) began to critique the integrationist ideals espoused by Civil Rights era activists and reclaim Africana history, culture, and values. These scholar-activists sought to use this perspective to transform university education in preparation to address the social, political, and economic conditions within their immediate neighborhoods and communities. This desire for a

[1] Within this chapter the term "Africana" refers to the collective histories, experiences, and destinies of continental Africans and their descendants located in the Americas, the Caribbean, and elsewhere due to enslavement and later voluntary and involuntary migrations.

relevant and solution-driven education on college campuses during this period led to the creation of the discipline of Africana Studies.

Africana Studies and the student-activist tradition that brought the discipline into being in the late 1960s has a much longer evolutionary development, however. This history begins with the purpose of education and the role of the student within ancient and traditional African societies and can be traced throughout Africana people's struggle for freedom and inclusion since their enslavement in America. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce students to the origins of the discipline, the early objectives and motivations of some of its early architects, and the particular ideological framework which students, faculty, and community members used as motivation to disrupt and, in some instances, to completely shut down, college and university campuses. In doing so, however, this chapter examines this activism as an outgrowth of Africana women, men, and youth who have historically used the acquisition of knowledge, literacy, and the creation of scholarship as methods to resist oppressive conditions in America.

Before exploring the origins of Africana Studies, it is important to explain the significance of nomenclature (naming) used for the discipline and the scope of the discipline. The students and scholars who brought about the field through activism often espoused the political philosophy of Black Power. Therefore, Black Studies was the initial name of academic units and reflected the philosophical orientation of those who agitated for the transformation of not only racist America but its racist higher education curricula. Within this chapter, the term Africana is used interchangeably with Black, African American, and Diasporan African. Africana Studies is used interchangeably with African

Studies, Black Studies, Pan-African Studies, African American Studies, African Diaspora Studies, and, less frequently, Africology. Since the institutionalization of the discipline in the American academy, many students, faculty, and administrators use these names interchangeably as well. But not without some debate.

Nomenclature has often reflected how many scholars have envisioned the discipline. A discipline, in simple terms, is "a specialized branch of study and knowledge."[2] For Africologist Ama Mazama, the various names for the discipline reflect the unresolved issue of the scope of discipline.[3] The normative perspective is that terms used in relationship to the discipline identify varying Africana cultures, communities, and regions that are of interest to scholars. For instance, as will be discussed later in the chapter, African Studies scholars or Africanists study varying aspects of continental African history, psychology, politics, sociology, and religion. For scholars in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, aligning themselves with the terms African American Studies or who refer to themselves as African Americanist scholars, their scholarship is frequently (not always) centered in the history, life, and culture of Africana people in North America. For James Stewart and Talmadge Anderson, these thinkers use theories, approaches, and perspectives borrowed from traditional Western disciplines of history, psychology, and

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[2] Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies* (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 2010), 3.

[3] Ama Mazama, "Naming and Defining: A Critical Link," *Journal of Black Studies,* Vol. 20 (2009), 68.

political science, to examine African American life, defining the field to be an inherently interdisciplinary examination of the African American experience.[4]

This interdisciplinary perspective also exists among some folks laboring within both African Diasporan and Pan-African Studies units. But many of these scholars see the discipline as an intellectual space in which there is room for engagement with continental African subject matter, both past and present, as well as the study of the linguistic, social, historical, political, economic, and behavioral realities of African descendants throughout the world (diaspora) and across time and space (pan). Practitioners who more so identify as Africana Studies scholars seem to view the discipline similarly to Pan-African and African Diasporan scholars. However, like Africologists, they attempt to dispense with Western traditional disciplinary theories, approaches, and perspectives and consider their approach to reflect the intentions of the early architects of the discipline who called for the use of "ideological and pedagogical blackness" as the approach to researching and teaching in the discipline and transforming communities.[5] This current brand of Africana Studies scholarship often defines the discipline as a transdisciplinary enterprise in which ancient and traditional African perspectives on reality, found throughout African history and culture, are in fact "the ideological and pedagogical blackness" that early laborers in the discipline called for. Africana Studies scholars, then, use this ideological framework

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[4] Talmadge Anderson and James Stewart, *Introduction to African American Studies: Transdisciplinary Approaches and Implications* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2007), 4

[5] Nathan Hare, "What Should Be the Role of Afro-American Education in the Undergraduate Curriculum?" *Liberal Education*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (March 1969), 42-50.

as a lens through which to examine the whole of the African world experience in an attempt to bring about their psychological, spiritual, political, and economic liberation.[6] Yet, African American, Pan-African, and Diasporan studies scholars often unquestionably align with this academic approach as well. The next section of the chapter presents the ideas of scholars who utilize this latter approach to rethink and define the African ancestral goal of education and knowledge.

African Indigenous Education: A Purpose-Driven Intellectual Tradition

Maulana Karenga, Daudi Azibo, Linda James Myers, and several other Africana Studies scholars support the idea that an African intellectual tradition predates what would become eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth-century scholar-activist objectives in the Diaspora.[7] Attempting to demonstrate the existence of a liberatory higher education model among Africans thousands of years before Europe enslaved and colonized the African world, these scholars look to the ancient African Nile Valley (Kemet/Egypt) educational systems that began during the Old Kingdom period, circa 2600 BCE. These educational institutions (universities) were grounded in a time-honored study of the movement of the natural world and how nature reflected the human potential to

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[6] Karanja Keita Carroll, "Africana Studies and Research Methodology: Revisiting the Centrality of the Afrikan Worldview Methodology," *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (March 2008), 6.

[7] Linda James Myers, "Optimal Theory and the Academic and Philosophical Origins of Black Studies," in Nathaniel Norment, ed., *The African American Studies Reader* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2007).

live a balanced life. In a word, the major purpose of education in the Nile Valley was to learn how to bring about balance in one's community through knowing one's self, that is, one's true self, one's higher self.[8] Referencing the mission of one of the oldest centers for higher learning in the Nile Valley in Waset (Thebes), Asa Hilliard details the educational mission: "The highest aim of Egyptian education was for one to become godlike through the revision of one's own 'Neter,' of how God is revealed in the person."[9] It was through this training that graduates were prepared to serve in spiritual, scribal, political, and other occupations that were in service to their dynastic government and/or local communities. For Myers, the students and educators comprising the movement for Africana Studies and the academic objectives of contemporary Africana Studies practitioners are heirs to this tradition.[10]

The mission of precolonial and contemporary West African education systems reflect ancient intentions. Within most African cultural or language groupings, formal education was—and in some communities continues to be—an initiation process, where all youth on the verge of adulthood are introduced to cultural knowledge that supports their spiritual development and life purpose.[11] Malidoma Patrice Somé describes this process within his contemporary Dagara culture of Burkina Faso, West Africa: "Initiation

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[8] Asa G. Hilliard, *The Maroon Within Us* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995), 92.

[9] Hilliard, 93, 99.

[10] Myers, 297.

[11] Vincent B. Khapoya, *The African Experience: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1994), 47.

focuses on and is a response to some basic existential questions faced by humans beings….Everyone wonders, Who am I? Where do I come from? What am I here for? and Where am I going?"[12] Additionally, depending on the particular social order of the African cultural grouping, youths may acquire further training to prepare them to perform specialized occupations, including but not limited to musicians, metallurgists, fisherpersons, healers, shaman, and other specialized professions through which they could use their individual talents and life purpose in service of their community.[13] Kwame Gyekye, writing about the Akan of Ghana, West Africa, sums up service to the community in this way: "one must have two responsibilities: to oneself as an individual and to the group. Maintaining the balance is not easy, but most people in African societies try to do what they can to fulfill those responsibilities."[14] Mastering one's purpose for community survival has therefore been the goal of formal education within many African societies.

The Making of an Africana Scholar-Activist Tradition

By the early eighteenth century, intellectuals in Europe and in North America began to fabricate the inferiority of continental and Diasporan African peoples. Although fifth-century BCE Greek historian Herodotus documented the ingenuity of Nile Valley inhabitants, eighteenth-century philosophers concluded that African people were

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[12] Malidoma Patrice Somé, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1998), 276.

[13] Somé, 40.

[14] Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Sankofa Press, 1996), 50.

uncivilized and backwards. French philosopher Montesquieu, Scottish philosopher David Hume, and German philosophers Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Hegel, for instance, wrote extensively about the ignorance and innately primitive nature of continental and Diasporan Africans. Their main assertion was that Africana people had never developed any form of science, mathematics, art, spirituality, political, and economic structures that were comparable to ancient Greek and Roman foundations and contemporary European advancements because they were incapable of doing so. These ideas echoed social science theories emerging during the eighteenth century, including the conclusion of Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, who classified Africans as an intellectually inferior species in comparison with all other races, especially the intellectually astute "white race." Although the enslavement of Africans by Europeans began in 1444 when Portuguese raiders kidnapped human beings off the western coast of the African continent, these Western intellectual and social science ideas provided *further* rationalization for the enslavement and colonization of Africana people.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enslaved and free Africans in what would become North America used literacy to challenge these white supremacist ideas and the system of enslavement. Between 1619—the infamous year when the first stolen Angolans were brought to Jamestown, Virginia—and the close of the Civil War in 1865, owners provided necessary skills, crafts, and management training for Africans to labor on plantations, and some provided biblical education in an attempt to encourage obedience to God's divine plan for their enslavement. While educating Africans was illegal, a few owners taught just enough literacy for a select few to read biblical scripture and to

teach Christianity to other enslaved Africans. However, in 1831 in Southampton County, Virginia, for instance, enslaved preacher Nat Turner used his interpretation of biblical scripture and his spiritual insight to organize and launch one of largest documented, deadly acts of revolution against Europeans in Africana history. While by no means the first, it is an excellent example of enslaved folks using their education in the service of community survival. These acts were in tandem with eighteenth-century lectures and publications composed by free Africans.

Indeed, some enslaved and free Africans in both the North and South before the Civil War taught themselves to read and write, while other free Africans, especially in the North, received education from Quakers and other religious organizations or established small institutions for themselves and their children with private support. David Walker's *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829), Maria W. Stewart's *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality* (1831), Edward Blyden's *A Voice from Bleeding Africa on Behalf of Her Exiled Children* (1856), and several others exemplify the purpose-filled scholarship meant to incite Africana peoples' critical thinking about collective methods to bring about their own emancipation. These scholar-activists unquestionably laid down the foundation for what would evolve into the discipline of Africana Studies. Despite the fact the discipline had not been formed, it was their orientation to the work, their connection to the community, and their undying commitment to liberation through education that makes them scholar-activists and early Africana Studies scholars.

Word to Our Mothers: Foremothers of Africana Studies

Gender has affected how the development of Africana Studies has been understood and historicized, especially when considering the differing degrees of access to education of Africana women scholar-activists living under patriarchal white supremacy, even compared with their Africana male peers. Because of these inequities, histories of Africana Studies have highlighted an almost exclusively male foundation. Our foremothers are central to the historical development of the discipline of Africana Studies, as is evident in the rich legacy of the scholar-activist tradition of Africana women orators, educators, and researchers, many of whom are also recognized as early developers of what has become womanism, Black Women's Studies, and Black Feminist Studies.

Professionally trained and self-taught Africana woman scholars have faced numerous obstacles, even more so than their male counterparts. A social system that placed women exclusively in domestic roles made it quite difficult for Africana women to be viewed as worthy contributors to the growing body of scholarship focused on African people and the Diaspora. This same social system excluded Black women from higher education, making it doubly difficult for them to secure positions using their expertise and seemingly impossible to publish in their respective fields. Finally, they faced outright sexism from their male counterparts, many of whom saw Africana women's arrival as an affront to their authority. Anna Julia Cooper, Maria W. Stewart, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Drusilla Dunjee Houston are four early Africana Studies scholars who overcame these obstacles, becoming major contributors to the body of scholarship on Africana people and are recognized as founders of Africana Studies.

Anna Julia Cooper has been recognized as an early founder of Africana Studies and Black Women's Studies not only because of her dedication to Africana people and education but also due to her significant influence on Black feminist intellectual thought during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Credited as the first African American woman to earn a doctorate in history, she remains an important Black feminist theorist because she was one of the first to consider the interconnectedness between the political, social, and economic liberation of Africana women and African people as a whole.

Cooper was born into enslavement in Raleigh, North Carolina. Still a child at the end of the Civil War, she had numerous opportunities to pursue an education and eventually obtained degrees from St. Augustine Normal and Collegiate Institute and Oberlin College. At that time, St. Augustine was a newly established institution for the education of Africana teachers, and while Cooper started as a student, in time she went on to serve as a tutor and later as a teacher.[15] After earning a master's degree from Oberlin, she taught at the M-Street school, a prestigious Black high school in Washington, D.C., where she would eventually be appointed as principal. She later became president of the Frelinghuysen University, a school that provided vocational and academic courses for working-class Black people.[16] Regardless of the location or institution, Cooper made the education of Africana people her life's work. Cooper was motivated to begin her doctoral studies at sixty years old, one of her most notable accomplishments. She

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[15] Cathryn Bailey, "Anna Julia Cooper: 'Dedicated in the Name of My Slave Mother to the Education of Colored Working People,'" *Hypatia*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Spring 2004), 57.

[16] Bailey, 58.

completed her doctorate at the University of Paris, Sorbonne, and defended her thesis, entitled "L'Attitude de la France dans la question de l'Esclavage entre 1789 et 1848" ("The Attitude of France on the Question of Slavery between 1789 and 1848").[17] Challenging the moral implications of enslavement, her thesis considered the impact of enslavement on African people in nuanced ways. Her thesis grappled with the contradictions of the country's slaveholding past, and the work proved to be another important and practical step in her journey as a scholar-activist.

Cooper's work has become a foundational example of early Black feminist intellectual thought. Her collection of essays *A Voice from the South* discusses the intersectionality of Africana women's identities and positions them as a unique and necessary force in reform efforts. In 1892, she astutely described the challenges faced by Africana women:

> She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both. While the women of the white race can with calm assurance enter upon the work they feel by nature appointed to do, while their men give loyal support and appreciative countenance to their efforts…the colored woman too often finds herself hampered and shamed by a less liberal sentiment and a more conservative attitude on the part of those for whose opinion she cares the most.[18]

Cooper's focus on Africana women's agency despite their invisibility was a strong call to action and made an intentional break from the gender norms of the time.

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[17] Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "Black Women Historians from the Late 19th Century to the Dawning of the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of African American History*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (July 2004), 251.

[18] Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (Xenia, Ohio: The Aldine Printing House, 1892), 134-135.

An Africana educator, orator, abolitionist, and theologian, Maria Miller Stewart was born a free woman in 1803 in Hartford, Connecticut. Much of Stewart's life remains a mystery, but her important, albeit short career as an abolitionist writer and lecturer places her at the forefront of the scholar-activist tradition that would eventually usher in Africana Studies. Mentored by free Black abolitionist David Walker, Stewart shared his belief that God was on the side of African American people and would avenge their enslavement and discriminatory treatment; however, unlike Walker, she avoided endorsing violence.[19] Instead, Stewart focused her energies on promoting education and moral discipline as the most viable roads to racial uplift. Further, she broke with traditional gender norms of the period and fiercely advocated for the education of Africana women and girls, going as far as to encourage them to promote, fundraise, and build their own educational institutions. Her deep commitment to the "daughters of Africa" was demonstrated both through the content of her speeches and her published works.

Between 1831 and 1833, Stewart launched a powerful career as a passionate orator and went on to become the first American-born woman to speak before an audience mixed with Africana and European-American women and men in 1832. In her provocative speech "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which we Must Build," Stewart highlighted the importance of women's education. She righteously asked, "How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?" and advocated that they "let

[19] Valerie C. Cooper, *Word, Like Fire: Maria Stewart, the Bible, and the Rights of African Americans* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 2-3.

every female heart become united and let us raise a fund ourselves; and at the end of one year and a half, we might be able to lay the corner-stone for the building of a high school, that the higher branches of knowledge might be enjoyed by us."[20] Despite her relatively short career, Stewart's published works and speeches left a lasting impact by demonstrating Africana women's early investment in education as a means of liberation and by showing the promise and potential of Africana girls as viable leaders in the long, protracted struggle against white supremacy.

Perhaps the most popularly known of the four scholars highlighted in this section is Ida B. Wells-Barnett, anti-lynching crusader, journalist, orator, and advocate for woman suffrage. Born to enslaved parents in 1862 in Holly Springs, Mississippi, she attended Rust College, an industrial school for freed people. After the death of both parents, the 14-year-old Wells-Barnett became primary caregiver for her siblings and took a teaching job to support them. In 1884, she moved her family to Memphis in hopes of securing a better-paying position, and, that same year, she successfully sued the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company after refusing to ride in the smoking car that was designated for Africana passengers.[21] Wells-Barnett's demand to ride in the Ladies' Car instead of the smoking car was more than a demand for individual respect; her refusal symbolized a

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[20] Maria Miller Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build," in Beverly Guy-Sheftall, ed., *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 26.

[21] Sharon Harley, "Wells-Barnett, Ida B. (1862-1931) Journalist and Social Activist," in Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture Volume 3: History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 350.

much broader call for the protection of Africana women and girls, a campaign that remained central to her activist agenda.

While teaching in Memphis, Wells-Barnett began to pursue a career in journalism and became co-owner and editor of the *Memphis Free Speech*. Using the resources most readily at her disposal, in 1891 Wells-Barnett wrote and published an article criticizing the school system for its inadequate allocations to Africana schools and was subsequently fired from her teaching job.[22] The following year, Wells-Barnett wrote another fiery column in response to the lynching of three of her friends; public response included the destruction of Wells-Barnett's *Free Speech* building and numerous threats on her life. Undeterred by threats, Wells-Barnett further researched the numerous lynchings of Black people and criticized local officials for their inaction. Her research was published in the pamphlet *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* in 1892, and a more formal analysis, *A Red Record*, was published in 1895. Her work garnered support from prominent African Americans, like Frederick Douglass, who helped her gain a larger national and international audience. Wells-Barnett's fastidious desire to document the terror of lynching also served as an important corrective that dispelled myths of African barbarity.[23]

After marrying the editor of the *Chicago Conservator*, the city's first Black newspaper, Wells-Barnett became an active contributor while also founding and serving

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[22] Harley, 350.

[23] Linda McMurry Edwards, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 166 -167.

in a number of civic clubs and organizations. During the opening decades of the twentieth century, Wells-Barnett served the National Afro-American Council and the Negro Fellowship League. Further, she helped to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).[24] Wells-Barnett's legacy of outspoken activism, striking prose and tireless fight for Africana people generally, and Black women specifically, positions her as an undeniable example of the stalwart Africana Studies scholar before the formal installation of the discipline.

Drusilla Dunjee Houston, historian, author, and poet, is best known for her meticulously researched *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire*, a study hailed as the first exploration of ancient African civilizations by an African American woman. But long before she began working toward *Wonderful Ethiopians*, Houston demonstrated unwavering interest in strong education for African Americans people, especially Africana girls and women. After serving as an elementary school teacher in McAlester, Oklahoma, she opened the McAlester Seminary for Girls at the close of the nineteenth century. Following twelve years of service and numerous commendations, Houston served as principal of the Oklahoma Baptist College for Girls from 1917 until 1923, after which she opened the Oklahoma Vocational Institute of Fine Arts and Crafts.[25]

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[24] Edwards, 282.

[25] Peggy Ann Brooks-Bertram, *Drusilla Dunjee Houston: Uncrowned Queen in the African American Women's Literary Tradition* (Buffalo: State University of New York at Buffalo, 2002), 6.

Her career in education was matched by her career as a journalist. Born into a "newspaper family," Houston was a regular contributor to the *Black Bookertee*, a periodical published in the all-African town of Bookertee, Oklahoma.[26] She was also a regular contributor in the *Black Dispatch*, which was owned by her brother, Roscoe Dunjee. Between 1914 and 1939, Houston wrote more than 2,000 editorials. Houston's experience as a researcher and journalist may have prepared her for *Wonderful Ethiopians*, a major undertaking that would become her life's work.

Self-published in 1926 amid rising racial tensions in the United States, *Wonderful Ethiopians* was an important project that connected the ancient majesty of the Cushites to their African-descended ancestors living in America. It was not only timely but necessary to achieve the historical recovery and progress that Houston envisioned. In the preface, Houston writes to Africans, "Lift up your heads, discouraged and downtrodden Ethiopians. Listen to this marvelous story told of your ancestors, who wrought mightily for mankind and built the foundations of civilization true and square in the days of old."[27] Much like the Africana Studies scholars that would follow her, Houston placed unmatched importance on knowing the truth and fullness of Africana history and using that knowledge in service of liberation. Clearly an act of reclamation, Houston challenged misrepresentations of African people within Eurocentric scholarship. *Wonderful Ethiopians* was just as much a project of recovery as it was a practical means of helping African

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[26] Brooks-Bertram, 7.

[27] Drusilla Dunjee Houston, *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire Book I* (Oklahoma City: Universal Publishing Company, 1926), 10-11.

Diasporans to reclaim and reconnect to their histories. As demonstrated through the extraordinary life and works of Cooper, Stewart, Wells-Barnett, and Houston, Africana women were active in conducting and sharing research about Africana people that was both practical and accessible to the community.

African American Research, Pan-Africanism, and African Studies at HBCUs

Historically Black colleges and university (HBCUs) had been the intellectual hub for Africana students interested in seeking a college education before 1965. Although initially established by religious missions and European-American philanthropists to educate free Africans in the North directly before the Civil War, the majority of these institutions were established in the Southern states from Reconstruction through the first quarter of the twentieth century. While many HBCUs initially began as primary and secondary schools, they became premier institutions of higher education for Africana people because of legislation that mandated segregation of races in most institutions and facilities in the South. It is within these segregated institutions where highly educated Africana professors—often having received advanced education and degrees from predominately white institutions in the North—trained, challenged, and supported many of the students and graduates who were on the cutting edge of civil rights activism during the first half of the twentieth century. In this way, HBCUs, in some instances, provided students with a critical education that engendered the possibilities for radical social transformation.

Some of the earliest research on the African American experience was conducted by HBCU faculty setting the backdrop for what would evolve into Africana Studies. Seeking solutions to disenfranchisement, poverty, and other conditions impacting the wellbeing of African communities at the turn of the twentieth century, Howard University professor and priest Alexander Crummell formed the American Negro Academy in 1897 in Washington, D.C. Featuring a series of yearly lectures and scholarly presentations, the Academy attracted the foremost radical scholar-activists of the day who used their scholarship as means to dismantle white supremacy. Some of the presentations included the writings of Arturo Schomburg, Archibald H. Grimké, and John W. Cromwell, among others.

Sociologist and historian William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois is unquestionably positioned as a forerunner to the discipline of Africana Studies.[28] Often described as one of the most prolific thinkers, researchers, and activists in Africana and American history, Du Bois completed his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1895. He was a founding member and later president of the American Negro Academy, and one of Du Bois's earliest appointments was to lead the sociology program at Atlanta University. While there, Du Bois led a series of social science research studies on the social, economic, familial, and mental wellbeing of Africana communities under the umbrella of the Atlanta Sociological

[28] Nagueyalti Warren, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Grandfather of Black Studies* (Africa World Press: Trenton, 2011); James B. Stewart, "The Legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois for Contemporary Black Studies," *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (1984): 296-311.

Laboratory.[29] Between 1897 and 1910 Atlanta sociology students often assisted Du Bois with this early research also known as the Atlanta University Studies, the publication and research arm of the Laboratory.[30] Furthermore, in one of Du Bois' earlier reflections "Strivings of the Negro People," published in an 1897 volume of *The Atlantic Monthly* and later as a chapter in *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903), he provided the prognosis that Africana people walk through the world with a double-consciousness resulting from the intergenerational impact of racism in America:

> [T]he Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, a gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. [31]

For Du Bois, this double-consciousness renders Africana women, men, and children often unable to see themselves beyond the racist characterizations and demeaning stereotypes of Africana people created and upheld by European elites, academics, and laypersons. It is this dilemma that twentieth-century educators in African Studies and later in the discipline of Africana Studies would seek to heal through scholarship and classroom instruction. Overall, Du Bois's scholarship on Africana communities—including *The*

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[29] Earl Wright II, "The Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, 1996-1924: A Historical Account of the First American School of Sociology," *Western Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2002), 165-174.

[30] "Studies of Black Families," *Finding a Way: The Black Family's Struggle for Education at the Atlanta University Center*, https://digitalexhibits.auctr.edu/exhibits/show/finding-a-way/studies-of-black-families (accessed November 2, 2020).

[31] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1897, 194.

Philadelphia Negro (1899), *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935) and innumerable other books, works of fiction, and articles—set the tone for solution-drive research and writing on the life chances of Africana people living under white supremacy.

Although Carter G. Woodson's tenure as faculty at Howard University was short lived, his intellectual contributions are enduring. With the goal of establishing scholarship about African and Diasporan history to Africana people who may not have had access to higher education, Woodson believed that self-knowledge could repair the damage that the social, economic, and physical conditions of enslavement and post-Reconstruction segregation has had on the psyche and self-esteem of Africana people.[32] To achieve this aim in 1915, he formed the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History) and its publishing arm, *The Journal of Negro History,* a year later. In 1926 Woodson established Negro History Week and published *The Mis-Education of the Negro* in 1933. It is clear that the contributions of these early male scholars, like their female counterparts, shaped the meaning of scholar-activism for Africana people.

The origins of African Studies at HBCUs must also be understood within this intellectual climate and as a precursor to the discipline. According to historian Mario Azevedo, African Studies is defined as "a broad field or area of study which combines several disciplines in the arts, the humanities, and the socio-behavioral sciences for the

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[32] Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "Making Black History Practical and Popular: Carter G. Woodson, the Proto Black Studies Movement and the Struggle for Black Liberation," *Western Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2003), 378-381.

sole purpose of studying and understanding Africa and its people from all facets."[33] Interestingly, normative histories highlight the founding of African Studies at Northwestern University in Chicago in 1948 during the Cold War era. During this moment in history, the federal government, along with European-American philanthropists, sought to fund Western academics in Africa to investigate and curb the extent to which neo-colonial African leaders were adopting anti-capitalist economies. Anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits secured yearly funding, allowing him and a team of professors and researchers to create Northwestern's program and to conduct research in all aspects of African social structures. The program became one of the foremost African Studies programs in the world that is still in existence today. However, prior to the creation of Northwestern's program, several HBCU faculty formed political alliances with continental African leaders, conducted research in Africa, and included African history in their curricula for the purpose of challenging European colonialization of the continent and reclaiming the humanity of both continental and Diasporan Africans.

Du Bois's intellectual and activist commitments to Africa are prime examples. During the period when racist theories about the inferiority of Africana people continued to prevail and segregation was the normative social order, Du Bois published *The Negro* in 1915 which reviewed the interconnected history of Africa and the Diaspora and was

[33] Mario J. Azevedo, "African Studies and the State of the Art," in Mario J. Azevedo, ed., *Africana Studies: A Survey of Africa and the Diaspora* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2019), 4.

one of the first books on this neglected history.[34] However, Du Bois's interest in Africa was evident in his 1895 dissertation, "Suppression of the African Slave Trade," and can be traced through his considerable involvement in and organization of Pan-African Congresses between 1900 and 1945, his teaching legacy at Atlanta University until 1910, and his role as a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In doing so, Du Bois organized, presented research, discussed position papers, and lobbied international political bodies alongside Trinidadian attorney Henry Sylvester Williams, theorist George Padmore, Senegalese parliamentarian Blaise Diagne, Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie I, and numerous other continental and Diasporan thinkers and politicians during the first half of the twentieth century. Du Bois and these early twentieth century Pan-Africanists from the continent, the Caribbean, and North America gathered in London, Paris, Brussels, and elsewhere in the European empire to rally for the end of the economic and political occupation of the African continent by European colonialists who sought to extract raw material resources at the expense of the political, economic, and culture autonomy of African cultural groups. For Du Bois and other attendees of the congresses, Pan-Africanism became a political philosophy that considered the end of colonialism on the African continent as a part of the collective (pan) liberation struggles against European racism and domination in North America, the Caribbean, and other parts of the African Diaspora. Notably, the philosophy of Pan-

[34] Jerry Gershenhorn, "'Not an Academic Affair': African American Scholars and the Development of African Studies Programs in the United States, 1942-1960," *Journal of African American History*, Vol. 94, No. 1 (2009), 49.

Africanism would later inform the political outlook and priorities of many of the students and faculty who fought for the development of Africana Studies in the American academy and shaped early curricular concerns.

In 1922 Leo William Hansberry offered courses about pre-colonial African social organizations, political economies, and cultural expressions at Howard University. In teaching these courses, Hansberry, like Woodson, wanted to provide an alternative history to the dominant representations of inferiority in Africa and its diasporic areas as a method to repair the damaged ego of his Africana students. During the 1930s, Howard political scientist Ralph Bunche researched colonial governments and African social and political systems of West, South, and East Africa. According to Pearl T. Robinson, the culmination of Bunche's research "emphasized the problems posed by colonial policies, imperialism, and the changing status of the contemporary African population."[35] Although faculty struggled for years to receive funding from the Ford Foundation to maintain its program, by 1953 Howard offered a graduate program, and by 1969 in the midst of the Black Power era, Howard became the first university in the country to offer a Ph.D. in African Studies, a program that continues today.[36]

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[35] Pearl T. Robinson, "Ralph Bunche and African Studies: Reflections on the Politics of Knowledge," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (April 2008), 1-16.

[36] "About the Center," Howard University African Studies Center, https://cfas.howard.edu/about#:~:text=In%201969%2C%20Howard%20University%20became,this%20glorious%20heritage%20and%20legacy (accessed November 2, 2020).

Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania housed the first two programs in African Studies at HBCUs. Fisk's program began in 1942 due to the American government's increased interest in colonialization policies on the African continent. To be sure, the Fisk faculty were not interested in furthering colonial priorities in Africa; much of their interests in the study of Africa fell along the same lines as Du Bois, Woodson, Hansberry, and Bunche's objectives. However, attempting just to benefit from federal and philanthropic funding, sociologist Charles Johnson, linguist Lorenzo Turner, and other faculty were able to eventually offer an undergraduate and graduate degree in African Studies before the demise of the program in the late 1940s due to a myriad of faculty transitions.[37] Horace Mann Bond of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania created the Institute for the Study of African Affairs in 1950 without external funding. Creating an exchange program, Bond was not only interested in researching and teaching about Africa. Bond created a bridge for which over one hundred continental African students could exchange ideas with Diasporan African students in attendance at Lincoln; Kwame Nkrumah, who would be the first president of Ghana, was one of these students. As funding went to the African Studies programs at PWIs, like the program at Fisk, Lincoln's Institute was short-lived, leaving Howard University with the remaining program in African Studies at an HBCU. At both PWIs and HBCUs, contemporary Africana Studies scholars attempt to incorporate the investigation of Africa as part of the study of the larger diasporic African experience and use this historical cultural knowledge as

[37] Gershenhorn," 50.

examples for how to sustain Africana life amidst white supremacism. Therefore, much of the scholarship produced by these early African Studies scholars comprise part of the Africana Studies curricula.

Civil Rights and Black Power: Student Activism at HBCUs

The struggle for Africana Studies cannot be divorced from the activist tradition that influenced the modern Civil Rights era (1954-1965). Scholars have well documented the scholar-activist tradition of HBCU students, faculty, and alumni who were key architects in dismantling segregation policies in the South during the modern Civil Rights era. After the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education* that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, community-engaged students, faculty, alumni, and other sympathizers and concerned community members were further inspired to challenge all policies of discrimination.

For HBCU students, this resistance was especially the case. English professor JoAnne Robinson and her students at Albany State in Montgomery, Alabama, initiated and helped to bring about the 1956 court ruling that desegregated the city's buses. In the fall of 1956 Hampton University students boycotted segregated movie theaters in Hampton, Virginia.[38] The same year, Florida A&M students, like Albany State students, boycotted buses in Tallahassee, Florida.[39] With training from theologian James Lawson,

[38] Jelani Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 2020), 186.

[39] Favors, 186.

Fisk University student Diane Nash, American Baptist Seminary student John Lewis, and many other members belonging to the Nashville, Tennessee, branch of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) began to stage non-violent sit-ins at segregated restaurants during this time as well. These Nashville HBCU student-activists were the first to successfully desegregate lunch counters on May 10, 1960, three months after the sit-ins began. However, it was the non-violent sit-in staged by four first-year students attending North Carolina A&T University in Greensboro, North Carolina, on February 1, 1960 that nationalized the sit-in revolution.[40] In April of the same year, SCLC activist Ella Baker organized students under the umbrella of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) at the HBCU Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. SNCC functioned as one of the major student activist organizations until the end of the 1960s.

For the remainder of the decade, even after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, HBCU students were often joined by students, both Africana and European, from colleges and universities throughout the nation. This united effort helped to overturn segregation policies and practices through voter registration drives, boycotts, and non-violent protests and marches throughout the South. These revolutionary activities resembled the traditions of thinkers, writers, and orators who used their talents in service of the liberation of their communities.

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[40] "Complete Coverage: The Civil Rights Movement in Nashville," *The Tennessean*, May 9, 2020, https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/05/10/nashville-lunch-counters-desegregation-civil-rights/4807209002/ (accessed June 29, 2020).

The institutionalization of Africana Studies is situated within the specific political priorities of both the Civil Rights and the Black Power eras. Even with the passage of civil rights legislation, Africana communities across the nation remained frustrated with unchanging social, economic, and political realities impacting the life changes of Africana communities. During the sit-ins, boycotts, voter registration drives, and other revolutionary actions, SCLC and SNCC activists remained nonviolent in the immediate threat of violence, intimidation, and possible death at the hands of the state and local governments and European-American bystanders, in most instances. Indeed, after a white supremacist shot James Meredith in 1966 during his "March Against Fear," many activists and students were inspired to think more critically about the meaning of identity and freedom. Howard University alumni Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), who by 1966 had become the Chairperson of SNCC, initiated shouts of "Black Power!" while marching to Memphis after the shooting of Meredith. In doing so, he is documented as one of the first to articulate and develop the philosophy of Black Power.

Black Power was revolutionary at the time, but it was not new. When Ture and political scientist Charles Hamilton published *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* in 1967, their work resembled many ideas articulated by David Walker, Edward Blyden, Marcus Garvey, Drusilla Dunjee Houston, Ida B. Wells, Carter G. Woodson, and numerous other late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinkers, for instance. Timely, the text argued for self-determination; Africana people in America should not seek to assimilate themselves in the American cultural fabric, as American middle-class values were anti-

human and anti-Black at the core.[41] What Ture and Hamilton advocated for and what became the core philosophy of SNCC was revolutionary nationalist philosophy.

Black Power as revolutionary nationalism called for a two-step self-determination process. The first step in gaining self-determination was for Africana folks in America to no longer identify themselves as Negro. Like Malcolm X and his use of "Afro-American" in the vein of the Black Muslim Movement and his use of X to replace his slave name, Ture and Hamilton admonished readers to refrain from referring to themselves as Negro and instead to identify themselves as Black. This process of self-redefinition, self-renaming, was an attempt to dispense with names in which European-America has used to identify Africana peoples since their enslavement in America. Coupled with reading and learning about Africana history and culture, African people could begin to love themselves for who they were and no longer believe in the white supremacist ideology that Africana people were inferior to Europeans. In reclaiming the self, one could begin to address the social-psychological dissonance within Africana folks' psyche that Du Bois defined as double-consciousness almost a century earlier. The second step was political modernization. A revolutionary nationalist perspective on political modernization is that Black folks must gain full governance over their bodies and protect themselves from violence and their communities from economic and political exploitation. Ture and Hamilton urged readers that it was time for "black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to

[41] Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967), 41.

begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society."[42]

Students heard this call, and many students attending universities and colleges across the nation began to identify with revolutionary nationalism/Black Power. From PWI state colleges to Ivy League universities, Africana students began to rethink what it meant to be in full governance of their education, and, more importantly, the purpose of higher education. At these institutions, regardless of the number of Africana students enrolled at their respective colleges and universities, students began to drop the name Negro from the name of their organizations and replace the term with Black or Afro-American. Or in some instances they created new campus-based organizations that were community focused.

Students also began to view their liberation as part of a larger international Pan-African struggle. Civil rights activists during the late 1950s and early 1960s, because of the decolonization efforts on the African continent, stayed abreast of these activities by reading newspapers and devouring scholarship produced by African leaders. Like Du Bois and attendees of the Pan-African Congresses that began in 1900, this new generation of radicals also began to see their struggle in relationship to the Pan-African struggle for liberation against colonialism on the continent and in other parts of the African Diaspora and that these political futures were aligned. As Africana historian Lerone Bennett Jr. estimated at the time, students were now considering the applicability of the theories and

[42] Carmichael and Hamilton, 44.

ideas of Malcolm X, Martiniquais psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, and Pan-Africanists Amil Cabral and Kwame Nkrumah, among many others.[43] Some students even supplemented their study by joining local and national Black Power organizations such as the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, the Us Organization, and the Revolutionary Action Movement. On campuses across the nation, however, the main priority was the call for equitable funding and a radically transformative education that would prepare Africana students to gain social, economic, and political control of their oppressed communities. In this context students consciously demanded the creation of Black Studies courses, departments, and programs on university campuses.

Students attending historically Black colleges and universities were at the forefront of espousing revolutionary nationalism to transform their institutions. During this Black Power era, students took it upon themselves to use any means necessary—familiar boycotting, sit-ins, and even violent tactics—to gain more governing power on their campuses and in their communities. One main objective was to advocate to state legislatures and university administration for equitable funding to curb the sub-par campus conditions and resources; whether HBCUs were state funded or private, these institutions were always underfunded, and this condition continues today. Students at Bowie State in Maryland adhered to this line of thinking, responding to the dilapidated academic buildings and dorms that plagued most HBCUs. According to one account, the Bowie students "protested, boycotted, then took over the school for a day."[44] Coupled

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[43] Lerone Bennett, "Confrontation on the Campus," *Ebony,* May 1968, 27-28.

[44] Steven Morris, "Black Students Revolt," *Jet*, May 9, 1968, 47.

with the concern of underfunding due to racist legislation, students wanted quality teachers and courses about the Africana experience.

For the most part, HBCUs, like PWIs, sought to offer an American liberal arts, social science, and science education that would prepare students to assimilate into American society. Outside of African Studies programs, with limited exceptions, the faculty were trained in Western traditional disciplines and the curricula at most HBCUs mimicked the course subjects, philosophies, and ways of thinking within these Western disciplines. For revolutionary nationalist students, this tradition was no longer acceptable. For instance, while students at Kentucky State University protested for courses in "Black history and culture," students at North Carolina A&T and 6,000 Howard University students and community members agitated for a "Black university."[45] Demanding that all departments at Howard should have Africana-oriented courses and that these courses prepare students to serve their communities, revolutionaries at Howard occupied the administration building, many academic buildings, and several dormitories between March 19, 1968, and March 23, 1968, effectively shutting down the university.[46] Unlike most HBCUs, however, what resulted at Howard was the 1968 series on Black Power, "Toward a Black University Conference," to discuss the changes in curricula that would best meet the needs of the faculty, students, and communities. Scholars and students throughout the country interested in these ideas came to this event. Following the

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[45] Morris, 50; Favors, 210.
[46] Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 142-173.

conference, in 1970 Howard established one of the first Africana Studies departments—the Department of Afro-American Studies—at an HBCU, just one year after the establishment of Africana Studies at San Francisco State College.

San Francisco State College: The Emergence of the Discipline of Africana Studies

Students at many colleges and universities in California throughout the 1960s sought to transform their campuses. Like the students at HBCUs and their intellectual activist ancestors before them, Africana students in attendance at PWIs were seeking a new way to construct their educational experiences on college campuses in what for them was a climate of white supremacy model of education, even more so for them given the percentage of Africana students on campus. From California State-Chico to the University of California at Berkeley, students engaged with revolutionary nationalist philosophy and organizations, and like the rest of the students across the nation during the radical 1960s, organized to demand inclusion and autonomy. Nowhere else on the West coast was this more apparent than at San Francisco State College (SFSC).

The literature about the emergence of Africana Studies as a discipline consistently points to the protracted student activism at SFSC between 1967 and 1969 as the watershed moment in the history of student activism on American campuses.[47] Due to the unwavering commitments of Romona Tascoe, Sonia Sanchez, Danny Glover, Jimmy

[47] Karenga, 12.

Garrett, Benny Stewart, and hundreds of other known and unknown students, faculty, staff, and community members who literally put their lives on the line in the face of violent police retaliation and jail time, SFSC is recorded as the first institution of higher education in America to establish a bachelor's degree-granting *department* of Black Studies. Although by 1971 there are more than five hundred units—departments, programs, centers—established on American campuses, the narrative of the establishment of Africana Studies at SFSC is significant because the institutionalization is the result of the longest strike on a university campus in American history.[48] The emergence of the discipline of Africana Studies is not only the outgrowth of a long and ancient Africana intellectual-activist tradition, but it is the first discipline in the American academy that is born out of revolutionary struggle.

The series of experiences that led to the emergence of Africana Studies at SFSC reflect concerns of students on many college and university campuses, especially at predominantly white institutions during the age of Black Power. For instance, during the middle of the decade, Africana students made up no more that ten percent of the student population.[49] Even so, the Board of Trustees for the California state campuses implemented new admissions requirements in 1965, which resulted in more than a fifty percent decrease in the enrollment of Africana students at SFSC.[50] Africana students not

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[48] Noliwe Rooks, "The Beginnings of Black Studies," *Chronicle of Higher Education,* February 6, 2006, https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-beginnings-of-black-studies/ (accessed November 13, 2020).

[49] John H. Bunzel, "Black Studies at San Francisco State," in Norment, 257; Biondi, 39.

[50] Biondi, 39.

only began to feel isolated, but believed the decrease was by design and in response to the radicalization of students. Karenga explains that "Black Studies advocates were first concerned with the low number of Blacks on campus which they saw as a racist exclusion to maintain the white monopoly on critical knowledge and to thwart the rise of a Black intelligentsia capable of effectively leading and serving Blacks."[51] Given the shift in demographics, student organizing became an even more urgent method to advocate for control of their educational environment. Adhering to the power in the process in naming outlined in Ture's brand of revolutionary nationalist philosophy, the following year, students belonging to the Negro Student Association renamed their organization the Black Students Union (BSU). Jimmy Garrett, a SNCC member who adopted revolutionary nationalism, became its primary organizer.

Academic concerns were the most pressing. Not only were Africana students at SFSC in the minority on campus, but similar to HBCUs, the majority of professors teaching at the institutions were European-Americans trained in traditional Western disciplines. The majority of the courses, then, unquestionably reflected the training and perspectives of the faculty, and the subject matter reinforced Western values and ideas at the exclusion of other cultural experiences and perspectives. As students who were grappling with the two-step prescription for Black Power, many sought to reclaim an identity rooted within African American culture and in continental and diasporic African experiences. Questioning the extent to which their education at SFSC should support this process was

[51] Karenga, 17.

of great concern. One student recounted the significance of shaping the BSU's demand for the discipline:

> Black people are not western; they are "westernized," made to be western. So basically their psychology is not Freudian, Alderian, or Jungian, only so far as they have accepted westernization. Students find themselves enchanted by the schools of psychology, but as they probe deeper they find less and less in an association with their lives. Other Black students pretend they can relate to western psychology by "becoming" Freudian. They psyche themselves out as we say, by trying to describe manifestations of every desire by description directly from the psychology textbook.[52]

The point here for this student and other revolutionary nationalist-minded students was that the faculty at SFSC did not consider or care that all subjects reflected European social, political, and economic ideals and values; and Africana students accept, without question, the authority, validity, and supremacy of this education. A relevant education was therefore a necessity on campus *and* within local communities where the youth, especially Africana and other students of color, attended underfunded public schools. Through the Community Involvement Program and the Tutorial Program, BSU students sought to remedy this concern in neighborhoods in San Francisco.

To immediately address the issue of relevance on campus, BSU members and other students moved beyond the traditional education process. One resolution was to offer courses in the SFSC's already existing Experimental College (EC). Founded in 1960 and funded by the student government, the College was an extra-curricular program in which all students, graduate students, and faculty could volunteer to teach courses not offered in SFSC's programs and departments. By the 1967 academic year, the BSU

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[52] Bunzel, 258.

students has offered a full Africana Studies curriculum.[53] Poets Sonia Sanchez and Amiri Baraka both taught within the program.[54] The second resolution was to negotiate for a degree granting department outside of the EC. In 1966, a year prior to the full curriculum in the EC, Garrett and other BSU students fleshed out a proposal for a degree-granting program in Africana Studies, which the SFSC administration had received the same year and approved in 1967.[55]

In an attempt to show good faith to the frustrated students, during the spring semester of 1968, John Summerskill, the president of SFSC, hired sociologist and previous Howard University professor Nathan Hare to be the first chair of the department. Hare immediately sets out to reconstruct the EC curriculum and grounds it in "both ideological and pedagogical blackness." In doing so, Hare crafted a curriculum resembling Ture and Hamilton's two-step process to actualize Black Power. Ture and Hamilton called for Africana people to first redefine themselves; Hare's first objective was the expressive phase which would "build in black youth a sense of pride or self, of collective destiny, a sense of pastness as a springboard in the quest for a new and better future."[56] Courses in Black history, African history, Black psychology, and Black literature would achieve this aim.

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[53] Fabio Rojas, *Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 62.
[54] Oba T'Shaka, "Africana Studies Department History: San Francisco State University," *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 7 (October 2012), 20.
[55] Karenga, 14.
[56] Hare, 42-50.

The second step toward Black Power is political modernization—that is, Africana people must be in full control of political, economic, and other infrastructure directly serving Africana people. Hare scripted a pragmatic phase to meet that objective, writing that it "operates specifically to prepare black students to deal with their society. The student's ultimate use of his pragmatic skills can be directed toward overcoming (or, if need be, over-throwing) his handicaps in dealing with his society." Black Math, Black Science, Black Politics, Economics of the Black Community, Development of Black Leadership, Black Statistics, Black Economic Workshop, and Black Political Workshop, for instance, are all courses that students can take in preparation to solve pressing social, political, and economic problems. The pragmatic courses are revolutionary because each course not only examines major continental and diasporic historical actors, theories, trends, and moments. But these courses provide students with historical examples of ways to shape and recreate one's reality in the tradition of continental and diasporic peoples. Even Black Math and Black Science are revolutionary because the mathematical and scientific problems and theories posed to the students are grounded in culturally relevant and practical examples.[57]

The 1968 academic year, therefore, must be considered one of the most radical moments in the history of American higher education. As students were demonstrating across the nation, SFSC staged a strike and shut down the SFSC campus. But if the BSU's proposal had been approved by the college president and Hare had been hired to

[57] Hare, 42-50.

complete the curriculum, why the need for the strike? Black Power philosophy stressed that Africana people must move swiftly to gain political and economic control of their lives. The idea that methodical patience and legislation would reshape the conscience of generations of European-Americans so that they would grant Africana women, men, and children political, economic, and social equality in American society was over.

For BSU students, sympathetic residents of San Francisco, Berkeley, and Oakland along with Black nationalist organizations and many nationalist-oriented Chicano and Asian American students in the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) who also did not see themselves in the curriculum, time was up! Although Hare completed this curriculum by the fall semester of 1968, the SFSC Board of Trustees had yet to grant the BSU a department. Tired of negotiating and waiting for the Board of Trustees to confirm the department, the BSU submitted a final list of demands to the new interim President S.I. Hayakawa in preparation for a strike if the demands were not met. In recounting this moment in history, SFSC professor Oba T'Shaka writes that "when it became clear that the administration would only offer 2.5 teaching positions the BSU had no choice. They had to call for a strike."[58] The BSU list included these comprehensive demands:

1. That all Black Studies courses being taught through various other departments be immediately part of the Black Studies Department and that all instructors in this department have full time pay.

[58] T'Shaka, 21.

2. That Dr. Hare, chairman of the Black Studies Department, receive a full professorship and a comparable salary according to his qualifications.
3. There will be a Department of Black Studies which will grant a Bachelor's Degree in Black Studies; that the Black Studies Department chairman, faculty and staff have the sole power to hire and fire without the interference of the racist administration and the chancellor.
4. All unused slots for Black students from fall 1968 under the Special Admissions program be filled in Spring 1969.
5. All Black students who wish to, be admitted in fall 1969.
6. Twenty full-time teaching positions to be allocated to the Department of Black Studies.
7. Dr. Helen Bedesem be replaced in the position of Financial Aid officer and that a Black person be hired to direct it and that Third World people have the power to determine how it will be administered.
8. No disciplinary action will be administered in any way to any students, workers, teachers, or administrators during and after the strike as a consequence of their participation in the strike.
9. The California State College Trustees will not be allowed to dissolve any Black programs on or off the San Francisco State College campus.
10. George Murray maintains his teaching position on the campus for the 1968-69 academic year.[59]

[59] Rojas, 69.

The strike was indeed successful. The strike began on November 6, 1968, and seven days later on November 13,' 1968, the campus shut down; each day hundreds of students, faculty, and supporters demonstrated on campus, including many European-American students who were supporting the BSU and TWLF's demand for an inclusive educational experience. Daily, police attempted to control the demonstrations with threats of violence and intimidation, and many demonstrators were continuously arrested. This radical and dangerous strike lasted for five long months, ending on March 21, 1969, after ongoing negotiations and compromises between the students and Trustees. In the end, although the Trustees did not renew Nathan Hare's contract, most of the BSU's demands were met; these students who were heirs to the ancestral scholar-activist tradition galvanized behind Black Power as their guiding philosophy to determine the purpose of their education and ultimately the purpose of their lives. With the department offering its first courses in the fall of 1969, the discipline of Africana Studies was born and set the tone for a national demand for other Africana Studies units, Ethnic Studies, and Black Women's Studies.

CONCLUSION

Given the scholarship on ancient and traditional African education, the purpose of education, and the pursuit of knowledge have always focused on learning about oneself and one's place in the world for the purpose of bringing balance and order to their

communities. While the most ancient and traditional education concluded that coming to know one's self as a divine and a being that comprised a linguistic, cultural, and familial community, instances of this purpose-driven knowledge was often evident among enslaved Africans who used literacy to resist those who enslaved and oppressed their communities. It seems, too, that this drive to transform the consciousness of African people living under white supremacy during the centuries after enslavement at times was conveyed best through what becomes the scholar-activist tradition and echoed the research and writing of Africana women in particular who sought to center the lives of women as a central challenge to white supremacy and patriarchy. The body of writings by Africana women and men who sought to reclaim African civilizations, African history, and culture also speaks to the activist tradition. So too does the voluminous social science research on Africana communities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the continued education of Africana students at HBCUs before 1965, express this tradition. Student civil rights activists were also inspired by this tradition, not only to agitate for equal rights in this country but also to demand a radically inclusive and autonomous education that resulted in the emergence of the discipline of Africana Studies.

Fifty years after its institutionalization, the discipline has matured and continues to be a viable scholar-activist enterprise at HBCUs, PWIs, and at Hispanic-serving institutions. At the time of this writing, there are almost four hundred Africana Studies

departments, programs, centers, or institutes.[60] While some of these units are able only to offer workshops, seminars, and other forms of programing in the areas of Africa and the Diaspora, others house robust undergraduate and graduate degree programs, teaching a variety of courses and enrolling hundreds of students annually. For instance, there are currently eighteen doctoral programs in the discipline, all of which matriculate researchers, writers, artists, community organizers, educators, and performers. While many faculty and students do not necessarily adhere to Black Power as their philosophical framework through which to see the world, most are indeed dedicated to critical thinking, research, community engagement, and dismantling white supremacy. Looking back on half a century of Africana Studies education, the scholar-activist tradition remains rich and viable.

Discussion Questions

1. Define Africana Studies and its purpose and function
2. Discuss the African origins of the discipline and the scholar-activist tradition.
3. Describe the early racist views about continental and Diasporan African people articulated by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers and social scientists.
4. Identify and describe the unique obstacles that early Africana women scholar-activists faced during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

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[60] Craig Chamberlain, "African American Studies in the U.S. 'is Alive and Well,'" *Illinois News Bureau,* August 29, 2013.

Writing Prompt

Research one figure of the Black Power movement and discuss how their ideas promoted an Africana prospective.

Chapter 14

The Vanguard of the Revolution: A Retrospective Analysis of the Black Panther Party

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Edinboro University of Pennsylvania

INTRODUCTION

In 1969 my mother migrated from Greenville, Mississippi, to Chicago, Illinois. She lived with a friend in a two-bedroom apartment and asked my uncle, Marshall Bowman, if I could stay with him, his wife, and three children until she could afford an apartment. I settled into the small three-bedroom basement apartment on the west side of Chicago on West Wilcox Street. On an early, windy, and cold day, my aunt cooked a healthy breakfast, including grits, eggs, and toast, along with lunch for my first day in school. After listening to instructions about my first day, I put on my coat, scarf, and gloves and met my cousins outside to walk three blocks to my new school, Mary Maples Dodge Elementary School on Washington Avenue. As we walked down Washtenaw Avenue, we passed Monroe Street and observed some police cars and a large crowd of bystanders. I wondered what the reason was for the commotion. It was mindboggling to learn later that I witnessed the aftermath of the chaotic scene on Monroe Street involving a significant and tragic component of the Black Panther Party history—the assassination of

two members of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party by the Chicago Police Department under the orders of the Cook County Illinois State Attorney Ed Hanrahan.

Unbeknownst to me, I had witnessed the consequence of the Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) devised by the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) J. Edgar Hoover. COINTELPRO was designed to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise, neutralize the activities on black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership and supporters."[1] Moreover, it sought to prevent the rise of a messiah who could unify the militants and electrify the Black nationalist movement. By 1969 the Black Panther Party considered itself the vanguard of the movement and became the primary target of COINTELPRO. By 1969 the charismatic Fred Hampton, Chairman of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party, represented this potential rise of a "Black Messiah." Consequently, he became the target of the Chicago Police Department, the FBI, and State Attorney General Ed Hanrahan. On that cold day of December 4, 1969, at 4:00 AM, a fourteen-gang intelligence unit raided Hampton's two-story apartment at 2337 Monroe, shooting ninety-nine shots and killing Fred Hampton and Mark Clark.[2]

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[1] U.S. Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, Book 3, Final Report (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976); "Respect to Intelligence Activities, The FBI's Covert Action Program to Destroy the Black Panther Party, in Supplemental Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities, The FBI's Covert Action Program to Destroy the Black Panther Party," in Supplemental Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, Book 3, Final Report (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976).

[2] Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 180.

CIVIL RIGHTS/BLACK POWER MOVEMENT

A growing number of scholars has explored and challenged the traditional paradigm and narrative of the "Civil Rights-Black Power movement."[3] Likewise, a number of crucial issues continue to be reexamined, challenged, and revised in the new scholarship. This new paradigm seeks to expand the discourse of the meaning and significance of the Civil Rights-Black Power movement. First, the new scholarship focuses on local people, local struggles, and the ordinary people, through courage and determination, who made extraordinary steps to change their circumstances. Second, the traditional narrative of the Civil Rights Movement that begins with *Brown v. Board of Education* and ends with 1965's Selma to Montgomery March is not only problematic but minimizes later developments. This timeline, with its regional focus on events in the Deep South, also ignores Northern movements.

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham commented that "in the late 1990s scholars came increasingly to question static and bifurcated regional images—generalizations that equated the Southern movement with racial desegregation and the belief in nonviolence and the Northern movement with Black Power and violence."[4] Furthermore, Jeanne

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[3] I use the term Civil Rights-Black Power to emphasize the point that these movements, which have often been viewed and examined as a dichotomy, are in fact interrelated. The revisionist scholarship has begun to examine this relationship and interconnectedness of Black Power and Civil Rights.

[4] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Foreword," in Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodward, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Press, 2003), xi.

Theoharis asserted that "early attention to black nationalist and militant revolutionary groups also largely fell into this paradigm, reducing organizations like the Black Panther Party to a handful of fiery male masterminds. Ideologies of self-defense, socialism, independent political action, and pan-Africanism were not understood as locally grown philosophies and strategies but instead were attributed to the charismatic brilliance (or 'ideological rhetoric') of leaders such as Malcolm X, Huey Newton, and Eldridge Cleaver and the alienations of Northern black communities."[5] Hence, in this work I will utilize the term "Black Freedom Movement," which aptly describes the post-World War II movement activities that occurred in various regions in the country.

Since the 1990s, a plethora of articles, books and documentaries have been published to reexamine the interpretations and narrow analysis of the Civil Rights-Black Power movement and organizations. Charles M. Payne's *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* and John Dittmer's *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* ushered in a revisionist approach in examining the Black Freedom Movement. Challenging the traditional emphasis on larger events, e.g., Birmingham, March on Washington, and the Selma campaign, this formative publication focuses on local struggles and people who laid the foundation for larger events in the movement.[6]

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[5] Jeanne Theoharis, "Introduction," in Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodward, eds., *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York: New York Press, 2005), 4.

[6] Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

Komozi Woodward's 1999 book, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) and Black Power Politics*, set the stage for a more serious and critical look at the much-maligned Black Power Movement, and critiqued historians who "claimed that black nationalism was the cause of the early demise of the Black Revolt." Instead, *A Nation Within a Nation* argued that "the politics of black cultural nationalism and the dynamics of the Modern Black Convention Movement were fundamental to the endurance of the Black Revolt from the 1960s into the 1970s."[7] Over the last two decades, a number of authors have similarly provided new research and interpretations which challenge the traditional characterization of the Black Power movement and its participants. These works examine the "Black Power" movement not as a dichotomy of the "civil rights" movement, but intertwined with, connected to, and extended from the larger social and political struggles of the era.[8]

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[7] Komozi Woodward, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) & Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 4.

[8] For further examinations of Black Power see Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*. (New York: Owl Books, 2006); Judson Jeffries, ed., *Black Power: In the Belly of the Beast*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Cedric Johnson, *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders: Black Power and the Making of African American Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

Black Panther Historiography

The 1960s saw the most pervasive and glaring movement to transform and revolutionize the economic, cultural, and social climate in the United States. From the Black Freedom Movement to the Anti-War Movement, from the Free Speech Movement to the women's rights movement, the nation faced a renewed challenge to the oppressive, racist, and discriminatory history of the United States. The Black Panther Party emerged in the context of this renewed struggle. Yet, the history of the Black Panthers, like similar Black revolutionary and radical organizations, has been reduced to symbolism and commodification that distort and minimize the revolutionary time that the 1960s represent. Important symbols that reflect the meanings of struggles are reduced to nostalgic memories and romantic recollections of days gone by.

Hence, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) represents another challenge to our historical consciousness on how to analyze its significance, strengths, and weaknesses. Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams's *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* remarked that "The BPP remains caught between culture—the popular perception, idealization, and misconception of the Party rooted in the cultural politics of the past and romanticism of the present."[9] Ryan J. Kirkby adds that "Of all the Black power groups to emerge from the tumultuous environment of the 1960s, the Black Panther Party (BPP) remains one of the most misunderstood and controversial."[9]

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[9] Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, eds, *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 3-4, 25; Ryan J. Kirkby, "'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised': Community Activism and the

The historiography of the Black Panther Party can be divided into four periods. The first period included publications of books, articles, essays, and commentaries by participants emerging in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These personal and first-hand accounts provided an up-close examination of the origins, beliefs, and ideological underpinnings of the Black Panther Party. Likewise, the media fascination served as an important platform for the Panthers to explain its goals.[10]

The second period emerged with the publication of Hugh Pearson's *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America*. Pearson's account proved to be the catalyst for a new phase of Black Panther Party studies, not least because it lay bare the amorality of a 1960s icon, Huey Newton. Given the central position of the Black Panther Party in the popular memory and history of the 1960s, Pearson's book was likely to be read widely; "given its relentlessly negative tone, it was sure to provoke a vociferous response from Panther supporters," asserted Joe Street.[11] The publication of Pearson's

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Black Panther Party, 1966-1971," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2011), 25-62.

[10] See Huey P. Newton, *To Die for The People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton* (New York: Random House, 1972); Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970); Earl Anthony, *Picking Up the Gun: A Report on the Black Panthers* (New York: Dial Press, 1970); Ruth-Marion Baruch, *The Vanguard: A Photographic Essay on the Black Panthers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970); Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*. (New York: Random House, 1967); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[11] Joe Street, "The Historiography of the Black Panther Party," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (May 2010), 363; Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America* (Massachusetts: Addison Wesley, 1994).

book witnessed an enormous outpouring of books and articles to refute and challenge this one-sided view of the party and Huey Newton.

The third phase focused on the Black Panther Party's contribution to African American and American political culture. The emergence of the renewed scholarship provided more documentaries and books that explained the positive contributions of the Party and the challenges that it faced as a vanguard organization. Challenging the notion that the party was simply an organization that promoted violence and was composed of misguided youth, the new publications revealed the complexity, composition, and varied interests of the party. Examples of this new scholarship were Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams's *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* and Brian Shih and Yohuru Williams's *The Black Panthers: Portraits from an Unfinished Revolution.* Shih and Williams's text is a collection of interviews, essays, and photographs of the rank-and-file members. The value of the portraits is that they challenge the myopic, narrow, and negative perceptions of the Black Panthers and examine the Party from the bottom up. This collection also sheds light on the various reasons that ordinary people joined the Party and the varied experiences of its members.[12]

Fourth, overlapping the books and articles is a number of documentary and films. Filmmaker Stanley Nelson's *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* was the first feature-length documentary to explore its significance. More recent is Shaka King's *Judas*

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[12] Lazerow and Williams, 1; Brian Shih and Yohuru Williams, eds., *The Black Panthers: Portraits from an Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Nation Books, 2016).

and the Black Messiah, which details the betrayal of Fred Hampton by the FBI informant William O'Neil that led to Hampton's death in 1969.

BLACK PANTHERS FOR SELF-DEFENSE

The Black Panther Party emerged amid the burgeoning Black Arts and Black Consciousness movement of the late 1960s. The death of Black nationalist icon Malcolm X galvanized a generation of poets and writers who began to publish their work in literary magazines, held poetry readings, staged plays in community theatres, and established independent printing presses. These artists represented a rejection of the values of the dominant society, and African Americans began to call themselves "Black" and identify with Africa. They began wearing dashikis, taking on African names, changing their hairstyles to natural Afros, and emphasizing links to the pan-African world and the African liberation movements.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) emerged as the major youth organization in the Black freedom struggle in 1960. Created as a mechanism to organize the sit-in movement, SNCC served as the bridge for many activists who became more radical in the late 1960s. I use the word "perceived" because, in reality, SNCC was a radical group only in the context of the times to challenge the prevailing White power structure throughout the South. Ella Baker, a longtime activist who had served in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference headed by Martin Luther King Jr. urged students to remain independent from the mainstream civil rights organizations. The SNCC

movement would become controlled by youth who had different ideas that challenged the mainstream civil rights leaders.

It is vital to understand the roots of the BPP and its forerunners. In *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*, Hasan Jeffries explained the importance of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), stating that "the creation of the LCFO was the defining event of the Lowndes movement. It transformed local black political behavior by providing African Americans with a framework for a new kind of political engagement."[13] Inspired by local activists and SNCC, Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) used the ballot symbol of a black panther, which later inspired Huey Newton and Bobby Seale as the name of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. In Lowndes County in Alabama in 1965, the Black population was eighty percent Black, but not a single Black citizen was registered to vote. More than half of the African American population in Lowndes County lived below the poverty line. [14]

Moreover, White supremacists had a long history of extreme violence toward anyone who attempted to vote or otherwise challenge all-White rule. Lowndes County Freedom Organization members didn't want to vote simply to place other White candidates in office. Instead, they wanted to be able to vote for their own candidates. The resistance to the LCFO movement resulted in various tactics to destroy the movement. The White power structure evicted sharecroppers, leaving many Black residents unhoused and unemployed, and it refused to serve known LCFO members in stores and restaurants.

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[13] Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 2.
[14] Ibid.

Small riots broke out with the local police often firing only on Blacks during these confrontations. However, despite these attempts at intimidation and disempowerment, the LCFO pushed forward and continued to organize and register voters. In 1966, several LFCO candidates ran for office in the general election but failed to win. While their attempt was unsuccessful, the LCFO continued to fight and their goal and motto of "Black power" spread outside of Alabama.

That same year in Memphis, Tennessee, James Meredith began his March Against Fear. Meredith had been the first African American enrolled in the University of Mississippi. In Mississippi more than 300,000 African Americans were not registered to vote despite the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. On June 5, 1966, Meredith left Memphis on a 200-mile march to Jackson, Mississippi, to "point up and challenge this all-pervasive and overriding fear that is so much a part of the day-to-day life of the Negro in this country and especially Mississippi."[15] On the second day of the march, a White supremacist shot Meredith in the back. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Stokely Carmichael's SNCC rushed to Mississippi to complete the march. It was during this march that the ever-increasing tension between SNCC and SCLC came to a head. SNCC planned to issue a new call near Greenwood, Mississippi. Instead of calling for Freedom Now, the new call would be "Black Power." Carmichael asked, "what do we want?" The crowd responded, "Black Power!"[16]

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[15] James Meredith as quoted in Henry Hampton's *Eyes on the Prize: The Time Has Come* (1987), a production of Blackside, Inc. (Alexandria, Virginia: PBS Video, 2006).
[16] Ibid.

It was within this context that the Black Panther Party for Self Defense emerged in 1966 in Oakland, California, where it aimed to combat rampant police brutality. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale had their first political experiences with Donald Warden in the Afro-American Association. Warden founded the association while he was a student at the University of Berkeley. Many of the Los Angeles-based activists, including Cedric Robinson, Richard Thorne, Ernest Allen, and Ron Everett (who changed his name to Maulana Karenga), received their politicization in the association. There was a large following at Merritt College who demanded Black Studies courses under the newly created Soul Students Advisory Council (later renamed the Black Student Union). Donna Jean Murch argues that the foundation and formulation of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (and other organizations) "had their origins—and antagonisms—in campus struggles" over curriculum and campus issues.[17]

PRECURSOR TO THE IDEA OF SELF-DEFENSE

Armed self-defense has a long tradition in the Civil Rights/Black Power movement. Charles Payne noted that Mississippi has a long tradition of Black folks taking up arms to defend themselves and their communities. The idea that the Southern movement was nonviolent does not adequately speak to the notion that southern Blacks, when necessary, "pick up the gun" to protect themselves. Although many Southern Blacks

[17] Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 125.

believed in the philosophy of nonviolence, they saw no contradiction in using armed self-defense when attacked by White terrorists.

Additionally, Malcolm X's influence on young activists was enormous, especially on those in the urban areas of America and on some participants in SNNC whom he encountered during his trip to Africa. He spoke to young activists concerning the limitations of nonviolence when local, state, and federal government was unwilling or unable to protect American citizens who were peacefully protesting for basic human rights. Prophetically, Malcolm X pointed out the frustration and questioning of the traditional civil rights strategies and objectives, noting, "And now you're facing a situation where the young Negro's coming up…There's new thinking coming in." He asserted, "There's new thinking coming in. There's new strategy coming in…It'll be ballots, or it'll be bullets"[18] Malcolm X believed in armed self-defense to protect activists when the federal government, local police, and state troopers were unwilling and unable to protect Black people. Moreover, Malcolm believed that the Black Freedom Struggle was part of the global struggle against western imperialism.

The assertion that the idea of armed self-defense was a phenomenon that emerged from the Black Panthers is, thus, erroneous. Quite the contrary, the idea of self-defense was practiced and used in Southern towns and cities. Robert F. Williams was born and raised in Monroe, North Carolina. After serving in the Marine Corps in the 1950s, he returned to Monroe and in 1956 assumed leadership of the nearly defunct local chapter

[18] Malcolm X quoted in George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 23-44.

of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Within six months its membership grew from six to two hundred. Many of the new members were veterans who had served in World War II, and emphasized their right to armed self-defense against violent White supremacists. and trained in the use of arms.[19]Angela Davis pointed out armed resistance was not a new phenomenon, having existed before the Black Panther Party due to the armed patrols in Birmingham to protect Black citizens against state and private brutality. It simply is not true because in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and countless towns in the South, this practice was clearly understood and, more importantly, was not a contradiction to the idea of non-violence. Paradoxically, although Dr. King espoused the non-violence philosophy, it did not prevent him from having armed guards who protected him and his family.

Finally, Lance Hill indicated, "In 1964 a clandestine armed self-defense organization formed in the black community in Jonesboro, Louisiana, with the goal of protecting civil rights activists from the Ku Klux Klan and other racist vigilantes." African American men in Jonesboro, Louisiana, led by Earnest "Chilly Willy" Thomas and Frederick Douglas Kirkpatrick founded the group known as the Deacons for Defense and Justice to protect members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) against Ku Klux Klan violence. Most of the "Deacons" were veterans of World War II and the Korean War. The Jonesboro group organized an affiliate chapter in nearby Bogalusa, Louisiana, led by Charles Sims, A.Z. Young, and Robert Hicks. Eventually, they organized a third chapter in Louisiana.

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[19] Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1962).

The Deacons' tense confrontation with the Klan in Bogalusa was crucial in forcing the federal government to intervene on behalf of the local African American community. The national attention they garnered also persuaded state and national officials to initiate efforts to neutralize the Klan in that area of the Deep South.[20]

BLACK PANTHERS, 1966-1968

The question then is what made the Panthers different? What was the charisma that captured the nation, Black youth, activists, and people who had been apolitical in the Oakland area and beyond? The Panthers were bold and openly challenged police brutality by *patrolling the police*. The Panthers, with their leather jackets, berets, large afros, and emphasis on Black culture, were primarily young people in their late teens and early twenties, representing the new wave of Black consciousness. Moreover, the brutality and repressive measures that were seen on the nightly news of Black people being beaten, water hosed down, attacked by police dogs, and killed in the Southern Black civil rights movement left an indelible mark on the urban youth. The party's emergence also stemmed from local problems in Oakland such as the murder of Denzell Dowden in Oakland, California.[21] African Americans in Oakland had experienced years of police

[20] Lance Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 2.
[21] Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

brutality. "The police'll jump on you, beat you up, put the gun to your head. This is what we were going through on a daily basis," stated Wayne Pharr. [22]

Adopting the symbol of the panther from the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party in 1966 primarily for self-defense. Newton had studied the legal system in Oakland and discovered that it was legal for those without a felony to carry a firearm, and the weapon could not be concealed. Thus, they began to patrol the police. If a person was pulled over, the Panthers would walk to the scene and stay a legal distance with their weapons. Sherwin Forte, a member of the Panthers, stated that "we referred to ourselves as the vanguard and we were setting by example a new course that we wanted the entire community to follow." [23]

Two major occurrences marked the organization's emergence on the national arena. In the early afternoon on February 2, 1967, Betty Shabazz was scheduled to deliver a speech on the two-year anniversary of the assassination of her husband, Malcolm X. She arrived at the San Francisco airport and was met by eight members of the Black Panthers dressed in uniform, waist-length leather jackets, powder blue shirts, and black berets and carrying shotguns and pistols. Huey Newton encountered a police officer in the airport who demanded to know why he was carrying a weapon, and when Newton responded that it was his right to carry the weapon, the officer commenced to unstrap

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[22] Wayne Pharr in Stanley Nelson, *The Black Panthers: Vanguards of the Revolution*, Firelight Films (Alexandria, Virginia: PBS Films, 2015).
[23] Sherwin Forte in *The Black Panthers: Vanguards of the Revolution*.

his pistol. Instead of backing down Newton shouted, "O.K., you big fat racist pig, draw your gun." The cop made no move. Newton shouted, "Draw your gun, you cowardly dog," and loaded a round into the chamber. Here were young brothers carrying weapons, challenging the police, and espousing revolutionary ideas such as the right to carry weapons and patrol the community against police brutality. Notably, the party's full name was the Black Panthers *for Self-Defense.*

The second incident that propelled the BPP onto the national scene occurred in Sacramento in May 1967. In a direct response to the Black Panthers, the California legislature was entertaining a new bill, the Mulford Act, which would repeal a previous law allowing public carrying of loaded firearms. The Black Panther Party decided to send a group of Panthers to Sacramento to voice their disagreement. Walking through the capital halls in their trademark black leather jackets and berets, the Panthers mistakenly walked onto the floor of the capital where the discussion of the Mulford Act was in session. The Panthers' charismatic character was on full display to the nation and had a tremendous effect on Black people who witnessed their resistance on every television set, radio station, and newspapers around the country. Almost overnight, a once-local group in Oakland gained national notoriety and would become the vanguard of the movement to empower and protect Black Americans.

The Panthers did not intend to have a nationwide organization, but the events of 1967 led to the creation of Panther-affiliate organizations in Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, New Haven, Atlanta, Nashville, Raleigh, and countless other cities. The BPP linked the Black freedom struggle to the global movements for national liberation and the

fight against imperialist nations. Similarly, they were influenced by the writings of Frantz Fanon, Chairman Mao Tse Tung, and national independence movements in Vietnam, Guinea Bissau, Algeria, Ghana, and the Congo. From these influences, Newton and Seale sat down to develop the ten-point program (See Appendix).

Bryan Shih and Yohuru Williams's *The Black Panther: Portraits from An Unfinished Revolution* provides first-hand accounts of why people joined the Panthers. Moreover, it examines Panthers from the bottom up, rank and file members rather than the party's leadership. People joined the Panthers for different reasons. Some joined because they had been the victims of police brutality and supported the idea of policing the police. Others were attracted to social programs like housing, health, and free breakfast. The Panthers did not specifically target the church people, or the Muslims, or members of the mainstream civil rights organizations. They sought the brothers who were in the streets, who had just been released from prison, or who had been the victims of police brutality. These were students, young people who had not been involved in movement organizations. A cursory examination of the Panthers' Ten-Point Program provides a more robust and insightful analysis that challenges the often myopic view that the Panthers were simply gun-toting thugs. The Ten-Point Program revealed the party goals and demands, including freedom, full employment, decent housing, decent education, completely free health care, an end to all wars of aggression, and the end of police brutality. Moreover, the Panthers' goal was not to reform the American economic system, but to dismantle the capitalist system that oppressed African American people. The Panthers promoted an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist position and supported national

liberation struggles in Asia and Africa. Yet, unlike their actual efforts to create an anti-racist, democratic society, the Black Panthers have consistently been portrayed as "violent, racist thugs" in popular media.[24]

GENDER AND THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

The success of the grassroots activism was due to the rank-and-file membership of the Black Panther Party chapters. As such, the role of women in the party cannot be underestimated. Although the public faces of the organization were men like Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver, women constituted more than two-thirds of the membership. Shortly after it was formed, women began joining the party and playing pivotal roles. Several women even served on the security force when Betty Shabazz visited San Francisco and were in the entourage when the Panthers traveled to Sacramento to protest the Mulford Act.

In 1966, Kathleen Neal was working with SNCC in New York City and had organized a conference at Fisk University, where she met Eldridge Cleaver, who asked her to come to Oakland and join the party. The two married in December 1967, and Kathleen served in several executive offices, including the position of Communications Secretary, a role that enabled her to solicit and write articles for the Black Panther Party newspaper. The newspaper was a vehicle that allowed the organization to publicize its program and to promote the BPP's political positions in a way that was unfiltered through mainstream

[24] Meredith Roman, "The Black Panther Party and the Struggle for Human Rights," *Spectrum: A Journal of Black Men*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2016), 8.

news affiliates. It also served as a recruitment tool to distribute information on the Panthers throughout the United States.

Other notable women Panthers included Ericka Huggins, who withdrew from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania to join the party in Oakland. Claudia Chesson-Williams joined the New York Party and taught the chapter's political education classes. When Yasmeen Sutton joined the party as a college student, she sold newspapers on campus and served on a committee with other Panthers to start the Langston Hughes Library. Katherine Campbell did not know anything about the Panthers when her sister suggested she volunteer for the Black Panthers' Free Breakfast for Children Program. Although initially hesitant at first, Campbell joined the party and became a dedicated member. Hence, although much of the attention was directed toward the Black men with the leather jackets and berets, women served as the backbone of the Panthers and held important administrative positions, participated in armed security, organized chapters in other cities, worked in the free breakfast program, and taught in the freedom schools.[25]

As such, there were inevitable gender complications in the Panthers that have been highlighted by Kathleen Cleaver and Angela Davis (who was a supporter, not a member) among others. However, it was not simply a Panther issue because gender disparity was an issue among many student and activist organizations in the sixties, including SNCC, Students for a Democratic Society, and the Free Speech Movement as

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[25] Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, eds., *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

well as in the traditional civil rights organizations like SCLC, NAACP, and CORE. Scholar Tracye A. Matthews notes that "despite the initial self-conscious creation by the leadership of a masculine public identity for the Panthers, some women and men in the Party challenged the characterization of the struggle as one mainly for the redemption of black manhood." She further stated:

> "While it can justifiably be argued that the BPP at various points in its history was a male-centered, male-dominated organization, this point should not negate the important ideological and practical contributions of its female members or of the men who resisted chauvinistic and sexist tendencies. Indeed, the diversity, both in terms of geography and personnel…cannot be understood and appreciated through simplistic explanations."[26]

BLACK PANTHER PARTY NEWSPAPER

The Black Panther was the official newspaper of the Black Panther Party. It began in 1967 as a four-page newsletter in Oakland, California. The rank-and-file members performed most of the work. In December 1966 Eldridge Cleaver was released from prison and gained some notoriety for essays published in *Ramparts*, the leading radical magazine in the 1960s. After a brief stint as a reporter for the magazine, he joined the Black Panther Party and became the Minister of Information and Chief Spokesperson.

The first issue was published on April 25, 1967, and *The Black Panther* remained in circulation until November 30, 1976. It became the main vehicle for financing the livelihood of the party. The newspaper cost $.12 to print and sold for $.25. The profits

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[26] Tracye A. Matthews in Betty Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, eds. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 233-234.

were used for the party's programs, and the paper became an international vehicle to promote the Ten Point Platform and to establish the Panthers' identity and goals. With the growth of chapters around the country, the newspaper was a means to spread the Panthers' program to cities and other locations where the Panthers could not reach personally without an enormous financial burden.

The paper promoted positive images of Black people, discussed important issues arising in the community, advertised the social programs, and featured powerful artwork by Emory Douglass. Initially an idea from Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, Douglass's first drawing was a pig on four legs. Emory edited the drawing by turning the pig upright and dressing him in a bandolier, holster, and a badge with flies surrounding the pig. It became the symbol for the police and served as common rhetoric used by the Panthers.

Interest in the party grew so large and so fast that there was no way to prepare for a nationwide organization. More than forty chapters emerged in cities across the nation, including Boston, Des Moines, Winston-Salem, Cleveland, Chicago, Philadelphia, Seattle, Kansas City, and Detroit. International chapters were also organized in France, Israel, India, Germany, and several African countries, particularly after Eldridge Cleaver fled to Algeria following a shootout with the Oakland police. The membership of local chapters chose their focus depending on the context of the issues in their towns and cities.

The overriding challenge that the Panthers faced was the tremendous growth of the party nationwide, which was not its original intention. Furthermore, there was no structure to vet or screen potential members or their reasons for joining the organization.

Because anyone could join the organization, some individuals who had no experience in organization were vulnerable to infiltration by agents provocateurs. Additionally, confrontations with the police and the arrests of Panther leadership, particularly Huey Newton, resulted in extensive time, effort, and money for posting bail and paying lawyers, which drained the party of its resources. Notwithstanding these conditions, the party remained relevant and successful in attracting members, and this success led to a concerted effort to destroy the Black Panther Party.

SOCIAL PROGRAMS, POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND COINTELPRO

The Black Panther Party's social programs were a major success in communities across the country. The Panthers and community activists were aware of studies about the effects on young children of not eating a nutritious meal and its impact on their learning ability. From 1969 to the early 1970s, the Panthers' Free Breakfast for Children Program fed thousands of young people. The program first launched at the St. Augustine Church in Oakland and quickly spread to community centers operated by Panthers members. Grits, eggs, bread, and milk were donated by local businesses. Although the federal government had begun a pilot program to provide breakfast to "nutritionally needy" school children in 1966, the U.S. School Breakfast Program targeted high poverty areas "where children had to travel a great distance to school." Partly because children

in Black communities weren't receiving these benefits, the Black Panthers successfully established free breakfast programs in cities across the country.[27]

In addition to the Free Breakfast for Children Program, the Panthers established free educational services focused on reading, writing, and history; other programs included free shoes, coats, and clothing drives. To meet the medical needs of the community, the BPP provided free medical clinics and sickle cell testing services. The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party was successful in establishing survival programs along with making serious inroads in political organization. Not only did these programs earn community support and legitimacy, they challenged the narrow views of the Panthers projected by the media and police. At the time, the Panthers were not fully aware of the forces that were being designed to neutralize and disrupt the programs' effectiveness.

The FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) initially started in 1956 as a mechanism to disrupt the activities of the Communist Party of the United States. By the 1960s the program broadly targeted a myriad of "dissident groups." In a 1967 letter to FBI field offices across the country, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover explained COINTELPRO's shift to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise, neutralize the activities on black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership and supporters."[28] Moreover, Hoover's goal was to prevent the rise of a

[27] "School Breakfast Program History." USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 24 July 2013. https://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/program-history (accessed July 1, 2021).

[28] Brian Glick, *War at Home: Covert Action Against U.S. Activists and What We Can Do About It* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 77.

"Black messiah" who could organize and electrify the growing youth revolt. The program targeted SNCC, SCLC, CORE, Students for a Democratic Society, and the Nation of Islam. However, the brunt of the FBI's secret program was primarily directed at the Black Panther Party. On July 16, 1969, Hoover announced publicly that the Black Panther Party represented "the greatest threat" America.

On April 2, 1969, nineteen men and two women of the newly formed Harlem Black Panther Party were charged with conspiring to blow up subway and police stations, local department stores, railroad cars, and the Botanical Garden in the Bronx. Over two years later when the case made it to court, as activist Lamont Lilly explained, "Despite the odds, after all the surveillance, warrantless wiretapping, infiltration and frame-ups, not one shred of state's evidence stood in court." After forty-five minutes, a multiracial jury rendered their decision; all twenty-one members were acquitted.[29]

The most egregious of COINTELPRO actions occurred in Chicago. At the age of 21, Fred Hampton exhibited the qualities of a "Black messiah," having shown that he was an effective leader on several levels. He had been elected as the President of the Maywood Youth Branch of the NAACP. He effectively organized civil rights activists by supporting civil rights workers in Mississippi and sending food and clothing to Mississippi aid workers. Not only was Hampton an effective organizer, he also possessed the qualities of a dynamic, charismatic, and electrifying speaker. He became a force to be reckoned with in Chicago. He built multiracial coalitions between various factions in the Chicago

[29] Lamont Lilly, "Panther Power: Afeni Shakur and the 'New York 21'" http://blackyouthproject.com/panther-power-afeni-shakur-and-the-new-york-21/ (accessed July 1, 2021).

community, and with the assistance of Bob Lee, the recreation leader of the YMCA, worked with African American, Puerto Rican, and White gang members. Forming a Rainbow Coalition of poor Whites, the Young Lords, and the Young Patriots was a daunting task, but Hampton and Lee were quite successful. Hampton also engaged in dialogue with the two largest Black gans in Chicago: the Black Stone Rangers led by Jeff Fort and the Black Disciples. The goal was to bring awareness of racism and classism to the different gang memberships so that they could work with the Panthers to form a powerful political unit.

Unbeknownst to Hampton, FBI informant and agent provocateur William O'Neal joined the party and rose through the ranks to become Hampton's bodyguard. O'Neal was also a paid informant of the Chicago Police Department who among other acts of betrayal, provided law enforcement with the layout of Hampton's apartment. On December 4, 1969, a gas truck arrived at the apartment building at 2337 W. Monroe Street on the West Side of Chicago. With O'Neal's detailed map, fourteen plainclothes police officers filed out of the truck armed with pistols and machine guns. Coordinated under the orders of Cook County State's Attorney Edward Hanrahan and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, Hampton was murdered while sleeping. Hanrahan called it a shootout, but evidence revealed that 99 shots were fired into the apartment and only one shot came from inside the apartment.

After the death of Hampton, COINTELPRO activities increased. On December 8, 1969, the Los Angeles Police Department served a warrant to search for stolen weapons at the BPP headquarters at 41st Street and Central Avenue. The warrant was obtained

using false information. What followed was a dramatic shootout by the assault team that included 200 police officers, the newly created Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team with gas masks, a helicopter, a tank, and military-grade grenades. The four-hour raid was televised and gained national attention, and it resulted in 13 arrests and 72 criminal counts. A young attorney, Johnnie Cochran, represented the defendants and argued that the group acted in self-defense. A mixed-race jury found the Panthers not guilty on almost all charges.

On March 8, 1971, a cab driver, a daycare worker, and two professors broke into the FBI field office in Media, Pennsylvania, and stole over 1,000 documents, including evidence of COINTELPRO, and after Senate hearings in 1976, the program disbanded. Nevertheless, CONTELPRO effectively reached many of its goals in disrupting, discrediting, and/or neutralizing the activities of so-called Black nationalist groups. It destroyed lives, caused dissension between organizations, and imprisoned countless numbers of activists.

Designated as "political prisoners," BPP activists from the 1970s have been imprisoned from nineteen to forty-nine years. In 2020, Jalil Muntaqim (formerly known as Anthony Bottoms) was released after serving nearly fifty years in prison. Robert Seth Hayes was released in 2019 after serving forty-five years in prison. Elmer "Geronimo" Pratts spent twenty-seven years in prison for a murder he did not commit and was released in 1997. Dhoruba Bin Wahad served nineteen years as a result of a murder conviction and was released in 1995. Despite these releases, at least sixteen known members of the Black Panther Party are still in prison and a number of members are in

exile, most notably Assata Shakur, who is listed as one of America's "most wanted terrorists" with a $2 million bounty for her capture. Presently, she lives in political asylum in Cuba and has been protected from several U.S. attempts at extradition.

CONCLUSION

The 1960s represent the most pervasive era to transform and revolutionize the economic, cultural, and social climate in the United States. The activist movements of the time did not emerge from an empty vacuum, nor were they initiated by any one individual or organization. The Black Panther Party has often been reduced to symbolism and commodification that distorts and minimizes the revolutionary time that the 1960s represent, and important symbols that reflect the meanings of struggles have been reduced to nostalgic memories from a detached past. For a more nuanced view, activist groups must be addressed individually, not as a monolithic entity. The Black Panther Party in particular must be reconstructed and reexamined as one of the most significant and radical organizations of the 1960s whose greatest legacy is the expression of human agency. The BPP's ideologies, actions, and programs were an expression of individual and collective power. They exhibited the power of people who think for themselves and act in ways to shape their life experiences and possibilities despite mechanisms and forces designed to hinder progress. In seeking to challenge the repressive state apparatus, they showed the possibilities and the perils of such endeavors.

Given the internal challenges and external forces designed to destroy the party, it is a testimonial to the courage and tenacity that the Black Panther Party was enormously successful on many fronts—free breakfast and educational programs, free medical clinics, free sickle cell testing, clothing drives, and food banks. The power struggles within the party between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver, the enormous resources to free Huey Newton and to pay bails for members who were arrested and facing trial drained the resources of the party. Of all of the organizations that were part of the Civil Rights-Black Power movement, the Black Panther Party was confronted with the full force of the repressive state apparatuses, from police departments and state attorneys to the FBI and COINTELPRO. With the revelations that came to light after the secret program of COINTELPRO was exposed in 1971, the Panthers obviously spoke truth to power.

Finally, the continued relevance of the history of the Panthers is evident in the present issues of police brutality, the criminal justice system, voting rights, and human rights. The Black Lives Matter movement is addressing these challenges, and despite the different context of the present movement, there are strategies that can be examined, not duplicated, in the ongoing and complex institutional racial discrimination.

Discussion Questions

1. What factors influenced Huey Newton and Bobby Seale to create the Black Panther Party?
2. What were some of the survival programs that the Black Panther Party created?

3. What role did women play in the Black Panther Party?
4. What was the role of the *The Black Panther* newspaper in the growth of the Panthers?
5. What challenges arose with the nationwide expansion of the Party?
6. Explain why the Black Panther Party was targeted by the FBI.

Writing Prompts

Choose a Black Panther mentioned in this article and do your own research on his or her life. What motivated them to join the Panthers? What were their contributions to the organization?

Appendix

The Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program

1. **We Want Freedom. We Want Power to Determine the Destiny of Our Black Community.** We believe that Black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.
2. **We Want Full Employment for Our People.** We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the White American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. **We Want an End to the Robbery by the Capitalists of Our Black Community.** We believe that this racist government has robbed us, and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.
4. **We Want Decent Housing Fit for the Shelter of Human Beings.** We believe that if the White Landlords will not give decent housing to our Black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.
5. **We Want Education for Our People That Exposes the True Nature of this Decadent American Society. We Want Education That Teaches Us Our True History and Our Role in the Present-Day Society.** We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world then he has little chance to relate to anything else.
6. **We Want All Black Men to be Exempt from Military Service.** We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a

racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Black people, are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military by whatever means necessary.

7. **We Want an Immediate End to Police Brutality and the Murder of Black People.** We believe we can end police brutality in our Black community by organizing Black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self-defense.
8. **We Want Freedom for All Black Men Held in Federal, State, County and City Prisons and Jails.** We believe that all Black should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.
9. **We Want All Black People When Brought to Trial to Be Tried in Court by a Jury of Their Peer Group or People from Their Black Communities, as Defined by the Constitution of the United States.** We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that Black people will receive fair trials. The Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical, and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the Black community from which the Black defendant came. We have been, and we are being, tried by all-White

juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the Black community.

10. **We Want Land, Bread, Housing, Education, Clothing, Justice and Peace.** When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect of the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain in alienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right,

it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Chapter 15

"Black Steel": Intraracial Rivalry, Soft Power, and Prize Fighting in the Cold War World

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INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s, struggles over Black Power politics and national sovereignty in a Cold War World played out in heavyweight championship "mega-matches" around the world. Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, and George Foreman represented very different visions of the postwar African American experience during the "Golden Age" of boxing—differences that manifested in the prize ring.[1] Pulitzer Prize-winner Gwendolyn Brooks wrote the poem "Black Steel" in hopes that the brutality of their matches would be mitigated by their shared experience as African American men, by racial unity.[2] In actuality, these intraracial rivalries exacerbated the real and perceived violence. The import of competing African American experiences reverberated outside of the United States as well, particularly in the Global South. Championship bouts between Ali, Frazier, and Foreman became a valuable cache of "soft power" for nations who were not "Super Powers."[3] Hosting one of these international mega-matches was a demonstration of viability and autonomy for those categorized as "Third World" in the taxonomy of the Cold War. Thus, the biggest prize fights—and some of the most important professional sporting events—

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[1] Ira Berkow, "Memorable, Forgettable, and Others," *New York Times (NYT),* January 1, 1991; Jerry Izenberg, *Once There Were Giants: The Golden Age of Heavyweight Boxing* (New York: Skyhorse, 2017).
[2] Gwendolyn Brooks, *Black Steel: Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1971).
[3] Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, 80 (1990): 153-171.

in the 1970s took place well outside of the United States or Soviet Union: in Michael Manley's Jamaica, Rafael Caldera's Venezuela, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu's Zaire, and Ferdinand Marcos' Philippines.

This chapter historicizes and internationalizes the postwar African American experience by placing it in the cultural diplomacy of sport. It draws on primary sources like newspapers (including daily and weekly, national papers and the Black press, American and foreign publications, in English and some French), as well as popular sport-centric and boxing-specific magazines; secondary sources including scholarly journals, academic and trade press books, as well as credible digital publications; and also the relevant and declassified government documents. These sources bear out the competing visions of "blackness" personified by three popular prize fighters that attracted not only a domestic but a global audience, and made the African American experience an important aspect of cultural diplomacy in the Global South during the Cold War.

"A HOT PANTS CONTEST"

"There we stand in this year 1972, no longer bemused by White Hopes, no longer disturbed by racial rivalries," proclaimed *Ring Magazine* as a new era for prize fighting, one which did not rely on interracial matches—the search for a "Great White Hope"—stirred up popular interest. African American heavyweights unquestionably dominated the sport's most illustrious division and a Harris Poll showed that boxing's popularity surged even in a complicated racial climate. But renewed popular interest in the sport actually derived from an intensifying *intraracial* conflict between Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali, representing opposite poles of a divided Black freedom movement, and George Foreman, who adopted an image that posed a cultural critique of the Ali-Frazier binary.[4]

[4] "Black Heavy Kings: Color Them Dramatic," *Ring,* March 1972, 50; Nat Fleischer, "Nat Fleischer Speaks Out," *Ring,* August 1972, 5; Andrew R.M. Smith, "Sculpting George Foreman: A Soul Era Champion in the Golden Age of Black Heavyweights," *Journal of Sport History*, 40:3 (2014), 456.

Media and advertisers capitalized on this rivalry. Ali had been an icon of the Black Power movement since he converted to Islam and discarded his "slave name" Clay in 1964, briefly adopting Cassius X before accepting a "full Muslim name" from Nation of Islam (NOI) leader Elijah Muhammad.[5] Frazier, on the other hand, was a devout Christian with an equally strong faith in capitalism. He happily purchased a "plantation" in his native Beaufort, South Carolina, and rode around on a $10,000 motorcycle adorned with an American flag.[6] Black sportswriters like Brad Pye and Bryant Gumbel suggested Frazier was "the blackest White Hope in history" when juxtaposed with Ali. Before their first meeting in the ring, dubbed "Super Fight," the Young and Rubicam Advertising Agency broadcast a telephone conversation between them. The call ended when their banter devolved into Frazier repeating, "Clay, Clay, Clay," indicating his refusal to acknowledge Ali's conversion, and Ali screaming into the receiver: "even white people call me Muhammad now…You're known as the [Uncle] Tom in this fight!" In response, Frazier challenged Ali's racial authenticity through skin color and social class: "I'm blacker than he is. There ain't a black spot on his whole body…. Clay is a phony. He never worked. He never had a job. He don't know nothing about life for most black people."[7] Even the presence of Brooks' "Black Steel" on the fight program did not blunt their sharp differences. No sign of the "black love" Brooks wrote about appeared during the fifteen bloody rounds they fought, or afterwards as their palpable animosity—and that of their

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[5] On Ali's early career and conversion, see David Remnick, *King of the World: Muhammad Ali and the Rise of an American Hero* (New York: Vintage, 1998) and Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith, *Blood Brothers: The Fatal Friendship Between Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X* (New York: Basic, 2016).

[6] On Joe Frazier, see Phil Pepe, *Come Out Smokin': Joe Frazier, the Champ Nobody Knew* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1972) and Andrew R.M. Smith, "Blood Stirs the Fight Crowd: Making and Marking Joe Frazier's Philadelphia," in Ryan A. Swanson and David K. Wiggins, eds., *Philly Sports: Teams, Games, and Athletes from Rocky's Town*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2016), 127-145.

[7] Brad Pye, "Prying Pye," *Los Angeles Sentinel (LAS),* November 12, 1970; Bryant Gumbel, "Is Joe Frazier a White Champion in a Black Skin?" *Boxing Illustrated (BI),* October 1972, cover; "Frazier Pays a Bill," *Chicago Defender (CD),* January 15, 1972; Thomas Hauser, *Boxing Is…Reflections on the Sweet Science* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2010), 88; Mel Ciociola "The Story Behind the Commercial of the Century," *BI,* July 1971, 26-27.

respective fan bases—grew stronger and more divided. Prize fighting mirrored if not magnified the divisions within the African American community.[8]

Popular culture, however, also pushed the boundaries of traditional politics. The mainstreaming of "Black Power" brought more African Americans into the orbit of the black freedom movement, by way of Soul music, Blaxploitation films, Malcolm X t-shirts, and "afro" hairstyles, even though it often diluted the message. At the turn of the 1970s Blaxploitation film often ridiculed both the radicals and moderates that Ali or Frazier signified. Instead, protagonists were strong, cool, and fashionable but ultimately independent. A rising challenger in boxing's heavyweight division, George Foreman, tapped into this cultural shift as he vied for his own space in a sport dominated by Ali and Frazier's animus. Even if the commercialization of Black Power tempered its politics, the ability of pop culture to navigate between static binaries of White and Black or liberal and conservative made it politically important and, for Foreman, effective.[9]

On the eve of 1968's presidential election George Foreman beat a Soviet fighter, Iionas Chapulis, to win the Olympic gold medal and then waved a miniature American flag. Before he could lower the flag and start dancing around the ring, like any other jubilant teenager, he had been anointed a patriot. Both presidential campaigns reached out to him for support and public appearances—even though he was not old enough to vote. Foreman became extremely popular, at least in Washington, D.C., but when he turned professional the following year, it soon became clear that fight fans did not put much stock in the kind of uber-patriot image that was better suited for professional

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[8] Thomas Thompson, "The Battle of the Undefeated Giants," *Life,* March 5, 1971, 40-48; Ray Kennedy, "Bull v. Butterfly: A Clash of Champions," *Time,* March 8, 1971, 49-55; Mark Kram, "End of the Ali Legend," *Sports Illustrated (SI),* March 15, 1971, 16-21; Norman Mailer, "Ego," *Life,* March 19, 1971, 18F, 28-36.

[9]Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2005), 118-119; William Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 195-224; William Van Deburg, *Black Camelot: African American Culture Heroes in Their Times, 1960-1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 153-154; Novotny Lawrence, *Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s: Blackness and Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 18-25, 38; *Baadassss Cinema—A Bold Look at 70's Blaxploitation Films*, directed by Isaac Julien (Independent Film Channel, 2002).

wrestling. Despite winning all of his fights, usually by knockout, fans across the country booed him and matchmakers did not foresee him as a championship contender in the near future. From late 1970 through 1971, however, Foreman took cues from his manager who implored him to adopt a "take charge" attitude as well as the cultural climate of the Soul Era, with its cool Black antiheroes, to fashion a new image. Learning first-hand from other Black athletic celebrities like Jim Brown and Walt Frazier, Foreman adopted a "cool pose" that resonated with more fans—and boxing promoters took notice.[10]

Boxing Illustrated noticed the transition and featured a cover story on "The Two Faces of George Foreman" that reconciled a new image which had some "unpleasantness" under the cool new clothes and sharp comments but undoubtedly made him a more interesting subject to write about.[11] When the negotiations over a rematch between Frazier and Ali hit an impasse, Foreman was thrust into consideration as a heavyweight championship contender. Teddy Brenner, the head of Madison Square Garden's (MSG) boxing programming, had been decidedly reserved about Foreman's potential and insisted he needed more seasoning against better competition before earning a chance to fight for the title. Suddenly, Brenner called him the best prospect since Joe Louis just as former heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson said that Foreman was "the only man left in the top ten capable of…stirring up some interest among the fans." Les Matthews of the *New York Amsterdam News* declared that this new Foreman had "star material." Earlier in the year, Matthews suggested that prize fighting had become a "hot pants contest" that considered style more than ability; Foreman's ascension buttressed that belief. Through an image reconstruction, Foreman marketed himself to the top of the

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[10] Smith, "Sculpting George Foreman," 457-460; Richard Majors, "Cool Pose: Black Masculinity and Sport," in Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo, eds., *Critical Perspectives on Sport, Men, and Masculinity* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1990), 120-142; Walt Frazier and Ira Berkow, *Rockin' Steady: A Guide to Basketball and Cool* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1974), 11-20; bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 156.

[11] Bert Sugar, "The Two Sides of George Foreman: Is He Is or Is He Ain't?" *BI,* February 1973, cover, 10-13, 63.

heavyweight division just as the "politics of cool" sold tickets to Blaxploitation films and Soul records.[12]

Boxing's "Era of Fantastic Millions," as Brenner called it in the mid-1970s, trafficked in the fierce intraracial divisions facing African Americans in a post-civil rights period. Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, and George Foreman all represented competing definitions of Black Power. Each of these three boxers appealed to or enraged millions of Black and White Americans, and many more whose identity fell outside of a facile racial binary. When those tensions were localized in less than 400 square feet, it was indeed worth millions of dollars. But these mega-matches between Ali, Frazier, and Foreman extended also to people who did not reckon with questions of race and identity in the U.S. Nations on four different continents paid dearly for the privilege of hosting these African American boxers because their matches became so valuable that they carried at least the perception of geopolitical significance in the context of a Global Cold War.[13]

"THE WORLD IS MY RING"

Race played a significant role in these contexts as well. Penny Von Eschen wrote that "race was America's Achilles heel" as the dichotomy between promoting freedoms abroad and preserving racial inequality at home made it more difficult to win the hearts and minds of people in the Global South. After World War II, Paul Robeson used his platform as a Black celebrity to ratchet up challenges regarding the American system's efficacy for people of color. In the early 1950s singer, dancer, and entertainer Josephine Baker posed

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[12] Dan Daniel, "Is George Foreman Next Champ?" *Ring,* July 1971, 6-7, 39; Floyd Patterson, "What Now, Heavyweights?" *BI,* June 1971, 22; Les Mathews, "Foreman is Star Material," *New York Amsterdam News (NYAN),* November 13, 1971; Les Mathews,"The Sports Whirl," *NYAN,* April 24, 1971; Smith, "Sculpting George Foreman," 459-462.

[13] Dan Daniel, "Brenner Invites King to Rent Garden, But His Fights Must Merit Arena," *Ring,* November, 1975, 18.

a more subtle critique of racial discrimination in the U.S. when she performed abroad. In contrast, the Eisenhower administration initiated state-sponsored "missions" of Black jazz musicians, including Dizzy Gillespie and Duke Ellington, to spread the word—again through pop culture—of the marked improvement in America's racial climate. By the turn of the 1960s the missions extended to sport as well, sending popular Black athletes on "Goodwill Tours" to show that the "First World's" racial barriers had come down.[14]

Throughout 1972, popular interest grew for a fight between two different expressions of African American identity—a northeastern, Motown-singing Frazier versus the southwestern Soul brother in Foreman. However, the champion refused to fight in the traditional "Mecca" of the sport, New York City, because new state taxes levied just before Super Fight significantly affected the net profits. Meanwhile the challenger became entangled in lawsuits that threatened injunctions against a title fight with Frazier. Therefore, the best offer came from outside the country as nations in the Global South searched for ways to wrest or retain influence in the Cold War world. The Frazier-Foreman fight was an attempt to use sport as the kind of "soft power" Joseph Nye identified as important to achieving foreign policy goals without using the "hard power" of military force.[15]

Jamaica promised freedom from American court decisions and favorable taxes that meant its offer could dwarf the financial promises of New York City, Philadelphia, Las Vegas, and Houston. Such a bid was made possible because the Jamaican government, in the first term of Prime Minister Michael Manley who enjoyed a 70% majority in

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[14] Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 5; Tony Perucci, *Paul Robeson and the Cold War Performance Complex: Race, Madness, Activism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 2-6; Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 227-250; Mary L. Dudziak, "Josephine Baker, Racial Protest, and the Cold War," *Journal of American History*, 81:2 (1994), 543-570.

[15] Nye, "Soft Power," 153-171; Jeffrey Hill, "Introduction: Sport and Politics," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38:3 (2003), 355-361; J.A. Mangan, "In Pursuit of Perspective: The Other Empire of Sport—Cultural Imperialism for Confident Control and Consequent Legacies," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28:17 (2011), 2609-2624.

Parliament, nationalized the event. The government owned "National Stadium" in Kingston, where the fight would take place, and borrowed nearly $2 million from the Bank of Nova Scotia to pay the boxers. Despite protestations from some politicians and private citizens about the financial risks, the Prime Minister and the media pressed on. Readers of the *Jamaica Daily Gleaner* followed nearly every step in the process with great enthusiasm, particularly during "Tourism Month" in October which culminated in a full-page ad from Manley himself, imploring Jamaicans to serve and assist all the tourists who would flood the island to watch this event, nicknamed the "Sunshine Showdown."[16]

The Frazier-Foreman fight illuminated a relationship between Black Power and the power of sport in Cold War geopolitics. Manley's political campaign revolved around cultural unity for an electorate that was predominantly Black but, like the African American community, remained deeply divided along lines such as class and religion. He also envisioned a foreign policy of non-alignment that required proving Jamaica's strength and sovereignty to the world. His administration believed that hosting a significant prize fight between two Black contenders could speak to both goals. Not long after Manley's election Jamaica's government subsidized a heavyweight championship bout, touting its racial symbolism while broadcasting it as a display of soft power in diplomatic circles. Foreman used elements of Black pop culture to position himself as an exciting antihero to either Frazier or Ali and, for many, interrupted the logical if not lineal trajectory of boxing's heavyweight championship. Similarly, Manley's Jamaica usurped an event that seemed destined for New York City, sparking a reformation in heavyweight championship matchmaking that ultimately made boxing a tool for cultural diplomacy in the 1970s.[17]

It is unclear whether or not the uptick in tourism around the Sunshine Showdown, let alone any residual tourism after the fact, recouped the significant investment of the Jamaican government in a single prize fight. But it is unlikely. The proceeds from ticket

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[16] Dan Daniel, "Jamaica Chases American Frazier-Foreman Bidders out of Battle for Title," *Ring,* January 1973, 6; H.L. Morrison, letter to the editor, *Jamaica Daily Gleaner (JDG),* October 31, 1972; "Seaga Wants Title Fight Arrangements Probed," *JDG,* November 10, 1972. For Manley's "Tourism Month" advertisement, see, *JDG,* October 15, 1972.
[17] Smith, "Sculpting George Foreman," 467.

sales and ancillary revenues came up $750,000 short of the cost to stage it. However, the event attracted a great deal of attention for Manley, who began a series of diplomatic missions to places like Venezuela and Cuba while leading Jamaica into the Non-Aligned Movement. The fight itself lasted about five minutes, but it set a new precedent for transnational boxing matches that both globalized and politicized boxing in the Cold War climate of the 1970s. In the midst of his first interview after winning the title, Foreman bellowed: "The World is My Ring!" Under his reign he lived up to that statement, defending the championship three more times in three other countries. Even though Jamaica lost money from the match, several other nations vied for the opportunity to host a Foreman title fight, suggesting widespread belief that the unquantifiable long-term benefits of international prestige justified short-term financial losses.[18]

Nations in each of the three "worlds" that comprised the Cold War order wrestled with "stagflation"—the simultaneous rise in living costs and unemployment rates—and a shortage of oil sparked a steep increase in energy costs as well. Yet Latin America, Jeremy Adelman writes, "was not experiencing a generalized malaise in the early 1970s" and instead enjoyed at least more available credit if not actual growth. The most developed nations in Latin America began to reenter a global economy which "represented a pendular swing in the region's relationship with international money." And *Ring* reported in its "Roundup" of 1972 that only one region of the world, Latin America, experienced marked growth in heavyweight boxing. As a major supplier of petroleum, Venezuela

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[18] Nat Loubet, "As Nat Loubet Sees It," *Ring,* August 1974, 5; Christopher James Shelton, "Down Goes Frazier! The Sunshine Showdown," The Ringside Boxing Show, http://www.ringsideboxingshow.com/SheltonBLOGForemanFrazier.html; Michael Kaufman, *Jamaica Under Manley: Dilemmas of Socialism and Democracy* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1985), 50; Hans J. Massaquoi, "Interview with Jamaica Prime Minister Michael Manley," *Ebony,* February 1990, 110; Pearnel Charles, "Jamaica and the Third World," *JDG,* December 3, 1972; John D. Forbes, *Jamaica: Managing Political and Economic Change* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1985), 22; Darrell E. Levi, *Michael Manley: The Making of a Leader* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 135-40, 304; Christopher J. Lee, "Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung," in Christopher J. Lee, ed., *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 2-19.

reaped the benefits of rising prices. But as a nation with a long history of domestic political turmoil and isolation from foreign affairs, it still suffered from a deficit of political capital. Hosting a championship prize fight between the cool young champion who cracked the American Fashion Foundation's top-ten best-dressed men, against a straight-edged former Marine, was an investment for Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera. He intended to leverage their hostility to draw in a large international audience and demonstrate his nation's place on a global stage—while hopefully securing his own reelection.[19]

After a brief (less than two minutes of boxing) title defense against José Roman in Tokyo, Foreman accepted Venezuela's offer and agreed to fight Ken Norton in Caracas. In the interim, Frazier and Ali squared off again for a fraction of their previous purses—about 1/3 in fact. They even fought a little for free this time when, instead of just televising phone conversations, the two rivals appeared on stages together for joint interviews to promote the upcoming bout while denigrating each other. Verbal sparring on the *Dick Cavett Show* gave way to a physical altercation over Howard Cosell on ABC's *Wide World of Sports* and reaffirmed the genuine hostility between the two. The action in the ring again surpassed expectations, this time with Ali edging out Frazier in another very close and visibly brutal clash at MSG; once again they both took a beating from state authorities in the form of a 14% tax on their one-night performance. Ambitious hosts in the Global South, like Venezuela, would not offer millions of tax-free dollars for anything less than a championship match.[20]

In a sports-centric country "obsessed" with its three B's—baseball, bullfighting, and boxing—the Foreman-Norton fight marked one of the most significant events in Venezuela's recent history. Securing the rights to host it, however, did not save Caldera's

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[19] Dan Daniel, "Norton Looks like Foreman's First Problem as Quarry Waits," *Ring*, March 1974, 20; Nat Loubet, "Roundup of the Year," *Ring*, February 1973, 17; Jeremy Adelman, "International Finance and Political Legitimacy: A Latin American View of the Global Shock," in Ferguson, et al., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective*, 115-126; Shirley Norman, "With Foreman, It's U.S.A. All the Way," *Ring*, October 1973, 34.

[20] Jimmy Breslin, "Ali & Frazier: Three Years Later," *Sport,* February 1974, 24-28; Richard Hoffer, *Bouts of Mania: Ali, Frazier, Foreman and an America on the Ropes* (New York: Da Capo, 2014), 125-128.

position. Just weeks before the event dubbed *El Gran Boxeo*, a new president, Carlos Andres Pérez, was inaugurated in front of a large national attendance and some international delegates, including First Lady Pat Nixon. Pérez promised sweeping changes and did not guarantee a friendlier relationship with the U.S., but he made it clear he would not jeopardize *El Gran Boxeo* in March 1974. He went a step farther and dictated that it would air live and for free on Venezuelan television. The decision negatively affected ticket sales for the freshly built stadium, *El Poliedro,* while venues that offered the picture and some gambling—such as the *La Rinconada* race track—profited. The new administration enjoyed all the prestige of the fight but hedged its investment by reneging on the tax incentives Caldera's regime had promised. Foreman knocked out Norton in the second round but fighters, promoters, and the closed-circuit television outfit who broadcast it all battled through a long, drawn out fight with Venezuela's new government. Despite appealing to officials, in this case U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela Robert McClintock and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, they lost a unanimous decision to Pérez. Norton had to pay $70,000 to get his passport back and return home; Foreman's bill was upwards of $300,000; and Video Techniques claimed a loss of $50,000 per day for the two weeks their closed-circuit television broadcast equipment remained impounded in Caracas. After the fighters and filmers left, another U.S. cabinet member arrived, Secretary of the Treasury George Schulz. He did not, however, come to Caracas to demand remuneration or even an apology for the offended citizens. Instead, Schulz entered into negotiations for a new tax agreement regarding American performers in Venezuela, similar to the agreement in place with the Soviet Union. McClintock was obviously frustrated, but he wrote to Schulz: "The problem of taxation of foreigners performing temporarily in Venezuela may take on increasing significance as Caracas becomes more and more a world conference and entertainment center" in the aftermath of *El Gran Boxeo*.[21]

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[21] Jerry Izenberg, "El Gran Boxeo," *Newark Star-Ledger (NSL),* March 24, 1974; William H. Heath, "Tax Squabbles Delay Champ's Venezuela Exit," *Miami Herald (MH),* March 29, 1974; "Foreman, Norton Held in Caracas Over Taxes," *New York Post (NYP),* March 28, 1974; "Foreman, Norton Still Unable to Leave Caracas," *Houston Post (HP),* March 29,

Ambassador McClintock's last communique relating to the Foreman-Norton affair went directly to the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa, Zaire. The next in this series of transnational title fights was set to take place in the former Belgian Congo and future Democratic Republic of the Congo. McClintock shared insight from his recent experience as mediator between foreign governments and American boxing interests with his colleagues in Central Africa. He suggested clarifying the conditions of taxation and other details such as referees and officials that caused undue strife in Caracas. He also wrote that it would save the embassy a headache if both principals, Foreman and Ali, simultaneously knocked each other out. Although McClintock soured on these major international prize fights, the forthcoming heavyweight championship bout would be the most lucrative (for fighters) and expensive (for the host country) boxing match to date.[22]

"ERA OF FANTASTIC MILLIONS"

In anticipation of the mega-match between Foreman and Ali, billboards dotted Zaire through the second half of 1974. Many of them not only drew attention to the fighters but to the political leader who brought them here. "The Zairian people thank their Enlightened Guide, President MOBUTU SESE SEKO, the promoter of this brotherly reunion

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1974; "Norton on Way Home—Foreman Still in Caracas," *NYP,* March 30, 1974; "Foreman is Still Stalled in Caracas," *NYT,* March 30, 1974; "Taxes Bite Champ for 300G's," *CD,* April 4, 1974; American Embassy Caracas [AEC] to Secretary of State, Washington, DC [SSDC], "Fight Over the Fights," March 26, 1974, "Secretary Schultz Travel Schedule," March 26, 1974, "Penultimate Fight Over Fights," March 27, 1974, "The Fight Goes On," March 29, 1974, and "Possible Advantages in a Taxation Treaty with Venezuela," April 1, 1974, all in Central Foreign Policy Files [CFPF], Record Group [RG] 59, National Archives and Records Administration—Access to Archival Database [AAD].

[22] AEC to American Embassy Kinshasa [AEK], "Ali-Foreman Fight Preparations," May 10, 1974, in CFPF, RG 59, AAD.

between the Black people who stayed in the land of their ancestors and those [who] were scattered around the world," one read. Another preached that "Black Power is sought everywhere in the world, but it is realized here in Zaire." To drive the point home, a third explained: "A Fight between two blacks in a black nation organized by blacks and seen by the whole world; this is the victory of Mobutism."

In the U.S., which had been very supportive of Mobutu since the early stages of decolonizing the Congo, this latest victory represented a defeat. Many writers were vexed that "Darkest Africa" wrested such an important event from American venues; that the nation which invented the "million dollar gate" in boxing a half-century earlier could not match an offer from a country that did not even appear on a map more than a few years old.[23] Some, like *Ring Magazine*'s editor Nat Loubet, tried to rationalize the global trajectory of boxing's most important matches by citing the tax incentives foreign governments offered and technological innovations that made it possible to beam images from anywhere in the world to television connections back home. "As indicated by a steady rise in *Ring* circulation and subscriptions, and the increase in major matches," Loubet wrote, "the fight game is flourishing amazingly all over the world." But he framed it within a Cold War context: "Make exceptions of Russia and China, which are too busy with international power and politics to devote any time to boxing."[24] It would be naïve to think that leaders in Jamaica or Venezuela were apolitical in their aggressive pursuit of the rights to host a championship prize fight. They exploited the disorganized and unregulated structure of professional boxing, as well as the global appeal of inter- and intra-racial hostilities in the U.S., to gain popularity and consolidate power. Mobutu's Zaire simply did it bigger and more explicitly, drumming up a guaranteed purse of $5 million each for the principals and racializing not just the action in the ring but the entire saga

[23] Anthony Merenghi, "Africa Dents U.S. Boxing Monopoly," *NSL,* March 28, 1974; Sam Taub, "What, In Heaven's Name, Is a Zaire?" *Ring,* July 1974,10.
[24] Nat Loubet, "As Nat Loubet Sees it," *Ring,* August 1974, 5.

leading up to it as a manifestation of pan-African Black Power on the world stage—and affirmation of Mobutu's unchallenged rule in Zaire.[25]

"Sporting events are often used as opportunities to swagger," British cultural historian Gerard DeGroot notes, "Mobutu simply took that phenomenon and multiplied it exponentially."[26] In addition to the purses, some of which had already been deposited in American bank accounts, Mobutu pumped tens of millions of dollars more into refurbishing the *Stade du 20 Mai,* a stadium named for the date Mobutu established his "Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution," which quickly became the only political party in the nation. He also invested in the infrastructure for a mega-event, including a new airport, highways, and parking lots that would accommodate all the traffic from tourists around the world to the center of Kinshasa. The Liberian government, at Mobutu's request, quietly pitched in for an accompanying music festival that would feature African, Afro-Caribbean, and African American artists in a celebration of rhythmic diaspora; or, as documentarian Leon Gast called it, "the history of the beat." This explicit emphasis on transnational Black unity paralleled the message from Brooks' "Black Steel" in a more global context, but was similarly undermined by the widening differences between the two Black principals in this prize fight and a media enthralled by reporting on it.[27]

From very early in his professional career, Muhammad Ali drove interest in his upcoming matches by insulting prospective opponents. When he came up against African American fighters, particularly after joining the NOI and changing his name, Ali often questioned their racial authenticity and labeled them "Uncle Toms." Joe Frazier bore the

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[25] Randy Roberts and Andrew R.M. Smith, "The Report of My Death Was an Exaggeration: The Many Sordid Lives of America's Bloodiest Pastime," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31:1-2 (2014), 72-90.

[26] Gerard J. DeGroot, *The Seventies Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic Look at a Violent Decade* (New York: Macmillan, 2011), 320.

[27] *Soul Power,* directed by Jeffrey Levy-Hinte (Antidote Films, 2008); Mavomo Nzuzi Zola, "Enfin, un Nouveau Stade du 20 Mai," *Salongo,* September 23, 1974; American Embassy Monrovia [AEM] to SSDC, "Tolberts May Be Financial Backers of Cultural Festival in Zaire," October 30, 1974 in CFPF, RG 59, AAD; Kalonji Kabasele Muboyayi, "Kinshasa est Prêt pour Abriter la Grande Explication Ali-Foreman," *Elima,* September 7, 1974; "Le Festival de Kinshasa," *Elima,* September 16, 1974.

brunt of this more, perhaps, than any of Ali's adversaries in the long prelude to their first bout. By the time they met for a rematch, however, Ali reversed course and instead began to mock Frazier's intelligence; he took to calling him "ignorant" and rather than "whitening" Frazier, he began caricaturing him as *too* Black. It was the kind of class-based antagonism that would not seem so out of place from a lighter-skinned man who grew up in a border state in relation to a darker-skinned man from a rural community in the Deep South. But it was a stark change for Ali. He continued this as he prepared to challenge Foreman for the title. While some writers questioned if Foreman represented a "white" champion, Ali mocked him as a product of an urban ghetto—Houston's "Bloody" Fifth Ward. Ali claimed he developed a new punch that would dethrone the champion: the "ghetto whopper." Then after a physical altercation with Foreman during an awards dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria, Ali overemphasized his opponent's blackness by calling him a "nigger" in a room full of hundreds of writers and fighters.[28]

Foreman tried to maintain his cool pose, although staying disengaged from Ali pushed him into a reclusive posture. That only gave "the Greatest" an unopposed platform. His message pivoted again when he landed in Zaire and tried to secure the popularity of the Zairois fans by telling them Foreman (and his dog) was "a Belgium"—a tag that struck colonial chords in Zaire. Bringing the kind of shepherd that Belgian authorities used to help maintain "order" during their rule over the Congo may have offended some proud Zairois, but Ali was not any more culturally sensitive. He proclaimed that, because he had popular support in Zaire, locals would assist him by "sticking pins in voodoo dolls" of Foreman and that, if he were not careful, Ali's new "friends" would "put you in a pot." Recycling images of cannibalism for American consumers did not align

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[28] Michael Arkush, *The Fight of the Century: Ali vs. Frazier March 8, 1971* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2008), 206-207; Mark Kram, *Ghosts of Manila: The Fateful Blood Feud Between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 159-160; Andrew R.M. Smith, "Series Overview—Life and Legacy of Muhammad Ali," *Sport in American History,* https://ussporthistory.com/2017/02/23/series-overview-life-and-legacy-of-muhammad-ali/, February 23, 2017; Fred Rothenberg, "Ali Does All the Talking," *Associated Press,* May 16, 1974; *Sport,* July 1973, cover; *BI,* July 1974, cover; Dave Anderson, "Broken Glasses at the Waldorf," *NYT,* June 24, 1974.

with the emerging nation's aspirations any more than references to voodoo in a country where 75% of citizens identified as Roman Catholic. Yet while Foreman sought to stay out of the pre-fight publicity as much as possible, Mobutu's administration prepared its counter-offensive against such images of primitivism.[29]

The stories sent out from Kinshasa—some directly to American writers and publishers—focused on Zaire's modernity via comparisons to the U.S. From hotels to restaurants, everything in Zaire they pledged would be comfortable and familiar. Although they happily trafficked in stereotypes and fetishes when describing opportunities for safari and visits to "friendly pygmy villages," the narrative focused on a nation not just emerging but already *emerged*. A press kit sent to Norman Mailer, who had been contracted to write a book about the fight months before it took place, called Zaire "a new dateline in the ever-growing almanac of sport" while the official fight program acknowledged Zaire was "aiming at becoming a respected and listened-to member of the world community." Accomplishing that goal rested not only on the deluge of stories Zairois sources sent out but also the defense against pieces from foreign press corps that Mobutu did not want published.[30]

Beginning with monikers for the event, Zairois "editors"—all under the influence of the Enlightened Guide—made liberal use of the "blue pen" for correcting written material. They immediately rejected the tag-line "From Slave Ship to Championship" and also strongly objected to the "Rumble in the Jungle" although that term stuck in the American sports media.[31] They closely monitored articles from specific journalists including Tom

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[29] Hoffer, *Bouts of Mania,* 146-148; Izenberg, *Once There Were Giants,* 96-97; Anderson, "Broken Glasses at the Waldorf"; Jeremy Rich, "Zaire for Jesus: Ford Philpot's Revivals in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 1966-1978," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 43:1 (2013), 4-28; Kenneth Lee Adelman, "The Church-State Conflict in Zaire," *African Studies Review*, 18:1 (1975), 102-116.

[30] "Mailer Press Kit," in the Norman Mailer Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas; Norman Mailer, *The Fight,* (New York: Vintage, 1997).

[31] Mailer, *The Fight,* 156-157; AEK to United States Information Service [USIS], "Ali-Foreman Entourage in Kinshasa for Fight Preparations," and "Ali-Foreman Fight Preparations," both May 8, 1974, in CFPF, RG 59, AAD; Dan Daniel, "September 25, at 3 A.M., Scheduled for Foreman-Ali Championship Fight in Zaire," *Ring,* July 1974, 8-9.

Johnson of the *New York Times* and Andrew Jaffe from *Newsweek*, who covered African politics critically. Not surprisingly, as the American Embassy in Kinshasa became keenly aware, both writers encountered many hurdles securing and maintaining visas to enter Zaire in the months leading up to the Foreman-Ali fight.[32]

Even sportswriters, such as Larry Merchant then writing for the *New York Post,* were subject to censorship. Merchant, like Mailer and many others, decided to return stateside when a cut to Foreman's eye postponed the fight for a month. Then Merchant was told he would not be granted a visa for reentry because an exposé he authored about a Zairois travel agent who promised an all-inclusive package to an American woman that did not, in fact, include lodging or meals, should not have been allowed out of Zaire. The U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa, on the other hand, agreed not to release its discovery about a sharp rise (more than 60%) in hotel rates since May or publicize the new Mobutu policy that foreign visitors spend a *per diem* (equivalent to about $40) every day they stayed in the country. The impending event, whenever it would take place and whatever people chose to call it, was too important—and profitable—to jeopardize.[33]

Foreman and Ali each had five million reasons to refrain from any critiques of Zaire. Not that anyone would have expected Foreman to suddenly take a hard political stance or comment on American foreign relations any more than his haphazard wave of a miniature flag now six years in the rear view mirror. But Ali, of course, gave up the prime years of his fighting career for refusing to join the American military's intervention in Vietnam, and he along with the NOI eagerly shone light on systemic racial inequality. Their agreement to fight in Zaire and take Mobutu's money supported an authoritarian regime that threatened the freedoms of millions more people of color. Yet Ali sent a message straight to the White House offering to cover the cost of a closed-circuit hook

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[32] AEK to USIS, "NY Times Articles on Zaire," June 28, 1974 and "Zairian Visa for Newsweek's Andrew Jaffe," July 24, 1974 both in CFPF, RG 59, AAD.

[33] AEK to SSDC, "Ali-Foreman Faces Possible Postponement," September 17, 1974 in CFPF, RG 59, AAD; Larry Merchant, "No Prob-lem," *NYP,* September 27, 1974 and "Our Man is Barred from Zaire," *NYP,* October 24, 1974; AEK to SSDC, "Revised Hotel and Restaurant Section of DSP-23," November 11, 1974 and "Ali-Foreman Fight," July 26, 1974, both in CFPF, RG 59, AAD.

up for President Ford's television to ensure he got a live view. Ford did not reply to Ali, but he did send a cable to Mobutu with congratulations for an "outstanding contribution to a sporting event of world significance." The event became even more significant when, against the odds, Ali withstood Foreman's barrage and knocked him down for the first time in his professional career, scoring what the *Semaine Africaine* called the knockout of the century.[34]

Back in New York, the *Times'* Red Smith believed the Rumble in the Jungle represented the high tide of international mega-matches, and he projected their decline. 1974 was, Smith wrote, "the year the golden egg cracked." But with the resurrection of Ali as heavyweight champion of the world and the global prestige accorded to Mobutu's Zaire, other nations vied for the rights to host Ali's next title fight and elevate themselves out of "third world" status. Boxing promoters in concert with closed-circuit television providers were happy to facilitate the cultural diplomacy of sport through prize fights. Jack Welsh, editor for *Boxing Illustrated,* insisted that only the "oil-rich" nations in the Middle East could afford the ballooning purses. He did not account for Southeast Asian nations who, in the wake of Saigon's "fall" in 1975, were desperate to preserve their own reputations across the South China Sea. The Malaysian government put up $2 million for Ali's tune-up bout against Joe Bugner, but the Philippines was prepared to invest significantly more to host a *bona fide* mega-match in Manilla—the decisive installment of Ali and Frazier's trilogy.[35]

Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos tried to keep the Philippines afloat in the choppy waters between Cold War superpowers. They focused on presenting images of order and growth that belied mounting debt and dissent, which they quelled with a combination of

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[34] AEK to SSDC, "Ali-Foreman Match," October 15, 1974 and "Message from President Ford to Mobutu," October 30, 1974, in CFPF, RG 59, AAD; Mailer, *The Fight,* 98; "Un K.O. Retentissant et Historique pour le Super-Combat du Siècle," *La Semaine Africaine,* November 10, 1974.

[35] Red Smith, "The Year the Golden Egg Cracked," *NYT,* December 22, 1974; Jack Welsh, "Editorial," *BI,* April 1975, 6; "Ali Outpoints Bugner and Keeps Title; Champion Decides to Continue Career," *NYT,* July 1, 1975; Daniel, "Brenner Invites King to Rent Garden," 18-19, 46.

foreign aid and martial law. Ascertaining the rights to host Ali-Frazier III was a cornerstone in the Marcos' façade. It became a protracted—and expensive—television commercial for the Marcos regime as American cameras panned from the Araneta Coliseum to the Malacanan Palace. Though staunchly Catholic, the Marcos seemed less interested in the Christian challenger Frazier and more fascinated by the Muslim champion, Ali. Even when the cameras caught an embarrassing misunderstanding as Imelda called Ali's girlfriend Veronica Porsche his wife—much to the chagrin of Belinda Ali back home—such *faux pas* were swept under the very expensive rugs in the palace just as the corruption and persecution within the nation were left off-camera. Proclamation No. 1081, which ushered in matital law to the Philippines in 1972 and specifically targeted an Islamic separatist group called the Moro National Liberation Front, remained in place when Ali and Frazier arrived in Manila to sign their contracts. The terms guaranteed Ali $4.5 million against a percentage of the total revenue from tickets and television, with at least $3 million coming directly from the Filipino government which, given its propensity to siphon off aid dollars, opens up the possibility the U.S. government in fact subsidized a portion of Ali's purse in a nation that oppressed its Muslim minority.[36]

Frazier expressed little to no interest in the Marcos or Ali families during his stay in Manila. Though he stood to earn half the purse of Ali he was fully focused not just on regaining the title but doling out as much punishment as possible in the process. His tolerance for Ali's promotional antics had run out by their third meeting. In response, Ali ratcheted up the insults. If he sought to deracialize Frazier by labeling him an Uncle Tom in 1971, over the next four years he dehumanized him. Accusations of ignorance that sparked their fight on the *Wide World of Sports* set were compounded with denunciations

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[36] James K. Boyce, *The Philippines: The Political Economy of Growth and Impoverishment in the Marcos Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 8, 303-338; Albert F. Celoza, *Ferdinand Marcos and the Philippines: The Political Economy of Authoritarianism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 39-72; Kram, *Ghosts of Manila,* 173-175; "Ali Makes Frazier Bout Official," *NYT,* July 18, 1975; Dave Anderson, "Magellan to MacArthur to Muhammad," *NYT,* September 23, 1975; Andrew R.M. Smith, "Revisiting the Thrilla in Manila: Boxing's Golden Era 40 Years Later" *Sport in American History,* https://ussporthistory.com/2015/10/01/revisiting-the-thrilla-in-manila-boxings-golden-era-40-years-later/, October 1, 2015.

of his appearance. Frazier, Ali said, was not just dumb but ugly; he was not a man, but rather a "gorilla." The poet laureate of the prize ring cut down consonants as he had opponents to rhyme off: "It's gonna' be a killa' and a thrilla' and a chilla' when I get that gorilla in Manila." Frazier kept his retorts short. "I'll make Ali fight for his life." And he very nearly did. After fourteen rounds Ali had trouble breathing and reportedly asked his corner to cut off his gloves. Before they could determine if he wanted to quit or just thought they ended the fifteenth and final round, Frazier's manager did stop the fight because his man could not see anymore. Their last meeting was undoubtedly the most brutal and also highest-paying of the three-part series: television proceeds raised the purses to a total $13 million.[37]

After Frazier and Ali recovered, they continued to criticize each other. Neither uttered a negative syllable about their Filipino hosts. In fact, Ali returned to Quezon City the next year to dedicate a new shopping mall, reinforcing the modernity of this authoritarian archipelago, while his barbs about the gorilla reified images of Frazier as something primitive. George Foreman relied more on humor than invectives to drum up interest in his rematch with Frazier. They both filmed a series of television spots dressed up as historical figures, including Betsy Ross, for their meeting in New York during the bicentennial summer. Again, Foreman pummeled Frazier and for the second straight match; his manager stopped the fight before Frazier could take any more punishment, ushering him into retirement. That set the stage for a seemingly inevitable return bout between Foreman and Ali. This time, Ali appropriated the epithet he previously launched at Foreman. "None of them niggers want Foreman," he said at a press conference, sitting beside Ken Norton, who had just starred as Mede in the film *Mandingo*. "Only this nigger, me, can take him." Rumors suggested they would reconvene at National Stadium in Kingston, a brand-new venue in Cairo, or even the Roman Coliseum, but none of those proposals came to fruition. Foreman followed Frazier into retirement in 1977. Between 1978 and 1979 Ali lost, regained, and gave up the title—without fighting overseas again.

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[37] *Thrilla in Manila,* directed by John Dower (HBO, 2008); Dick Shaap, "The Manila Maulers," *Sport,* December 1975, 61-67; Joe Frazier, "I'll Make Ali Fight for His Life," *Ring,* October 1975, 8-9.

As the fierce intraracial rivalry between three Black heavyweights dissipated, so too did the appetite for hosting an international championship prize fight.[38]

CONCLUSION

The generation of heavyweight boxers following Frazier, Foreman, and Ali at the turn of the 1980s did not have the same global appeal or loaded racial rivalries in an era envisioned as "post-civil rights" if not "colorblind," while geopolitical divisions softened in a thawing Cold War climate.[39] International mega-matches were no longer a blue chip investment for tourist dollars or diplomatic prestige. One country desperate for good public relations was Apartheid-era South Africa, and hotelier Sol Kerzner tried to resurrect the Era of Fantastic Millions in a kind of red-light resort called "Sun City." Though he secured an interracial heavyweight championship fight between native South African challenger Gerrie Coetzee and African American champion Mike Weaver in 1980, it did not engender an encore. Moreover, Black athletes in the U.S. were able to deter other African American boxers from legitimizing South African Apartheid by agreeing to perform in Sun City.[40]

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[38] Smith, "Revisiting the *Thrilla in Manila*"; "Heavens to Betsy and by George! Have Foreman and Frazier Wigged Out?" *People,* June 7, 1976, 24; Smith, "Blood Stirs the Fight Crowd," 144; Dave Anderson, "Show Ali a Close-Up of Foreman," *NYT,* October 5, 1976; Mark Kram, "Not the Greatest Way to Go," *SI,* October 11, 1976, 36-38; "Ali in Jamaica Talking of Foreman," *NYT,* January 1, 1975; "See Foreman Rematch in Four Months, Says Ali," *CD,* February 24, 1975; Dan Daniel, "Boxing World Over Waits for Ali to Quit Hibernation," *Ring,* March 1975, 20; "Ali v. Foreman in New Year?" *Boxing News,* December 17, 1976, cover.

[39] Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 250-254.

[40] Jack Newfield, *Only in America: The Life and Crimes of Don King* (New York: William Morrow, 1995), 196-197. On the history of boxing in Las Vegas, see Richard O. Davies,

Instead, America's "Sin City" became the new "Mecca" of prize fighting when hotel-casinos on the Las Vegas Strip recognized that hosting an event like a heavyweight title bout stimulated significant action not just on their sports books but at their tables and on the slot machines as well. In the 1970s, foreign governments relied on tourist dollars and ticket sales to cover the expense of hosting a big-time title bout and paying the multi-million dollar purses to fighters. In 1980s Las Vegas, increased gambling and hotel reservations ensured profits regardless of ticket sales. Likewise, the proliferation of pay-per-view television to individual homes rather than closed-circuit feeds at public places dramatically raised the television revenues against which purses were typically guaranteed, making ticket sales nearly irrelevant to fighters and promoters in boxing's biggest events. Yet the legacy of the brief window between 1973 and 1975, where the most expensive and lucrative prize fights to date occurred in transoceanic title bouts around the Global South, was firmly entrenched even after the boxing world's axis tilted toward Sin City. Michael Manley served two terms in Jamaica before losing an election in 1980, but rode his popularity to reelection in 1989. Similarly, Carlos Pérez lost the presidency of Venezuela in 1979 but was also reelected a decade later. Ferdinand Marcos maintained martial law until 1981 and stayed in power through 1986. In Zaire, Mobutu kept his hold over the country until 1996. The deep fault lines within an African American community in the midst of a Black freedom struggle were troubling at home, but set inside of a prize ring those divisions became valuable commodities toward cultural diplomacy for "third world" nations fighting for their place in a Cold War world.

Discussion Questions

1. How did American race relations affect Cold War geopolitics?
2. Which factors most deeply divided African Americans in the Black Freedom Struggle?
3. How can historians measure the impact of sports or pop culture on diplomacy?

The Main Event: Boxing in Nevada from the Mining Camps to the Las Vegas Strip (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2014).

Writing Prompt

Why were foreign governments interested in hosting sports events featuring American athletes?

Chapter 16

Black Martial Artists: Modernity in Pursuit of an African Fighting System in the African Diaspora

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Introduction

"You may not wish to fight me now, sucka! But you will.
I'm gonna see to that! Sayonara…Who's the Master?
Sho'nuff—The Shogun of Harlem."

--*The Last Dragon*[1]

In contemporary martial arts and hip-hop culture, the name *Wu-Tang Clan* is immediately reminiscent of the African American rap group Wu Tang Clan and traditional Chinese martial arts movies. The names Shaolin and Wu Tang were made familiar to urban audiences throughout North America in the 1970s. Asian and Asian American cultures, along with African and African American cultures, were exported throughout the world by the globalization of American popular culture. Chinese martial arts movies, produced by the Shaw Brothers in Hong Kong movie studios, forged an African and Asian

[1] *The Best Last Dragon Quotes,* https://sites.google.com/site/lastdragontribute/the-last-dragon-movie-quotes accessed May 31, 2021. The movie the *Last Dragon* was produced in 1985 by Barry Gordon. It was a comedic version of Black and Asian martial arts culture. The film became a cult classic for youth and young adults of the 1980s.

cultural identity that intersected Black popular culture and martial arts culture.[2] Despite the Chinese migrating to North America in the 1800s and Africans being forced into enslavement in North America as early as the 1500s, both the Chinese and Africans preserved traditional cultural systems while forging new identities and systems through the pursuit of modernity.

The examination of modernity is necessary to understand the relationship between Black martial artists who use African dance and drum culture in the fighting systems developed in the African diaspora. This chapter explores the modernity of Black martial artists primarily in the United States. They were introduced to the fighting arts of Asia while resurrecting the traditional fighting arts of Africa. Black martial artists incorporate traditional African dance, drumming, and culture into new world African fighting systems and reconstruct these traditions to reflect a Black worldview, Africana sensibilities, and cultural hegemony in the African diaspora. Black martial arts societies were organized after World War II and primarily in the urban North of the United States of America during its foundational years (1945-1969).[3]

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[2] The Shaw Brothers Studio produced Chinese martial arts films for eighty years and introduced those films to urban audiences in the United States of America in the 1970s. http://shawbrothersuniverse.com/the-shaw-brothers-studio-story/ accessed January 28, 2020.

[3] Martial arts were introduced to American culture after soldiers returned from World War II. The Korean War and the globalization of American society during the Vietnam War years brought Asian martial arts culture to the forefront of American society. In the Black community the first martial arts communities developed in the urban areas of the United States of America.

Moreover, during the Black Power era, Black martial artists started looking for a meaningful purpose for their art by exploring traditional African societies, African-based fighting theories, African mythologies, Pan-African fighting societies, and popular culture. By creating their own unique forms and systems, Black martial artists constructed a new African or Black consciousness. In addition, this chapter will utilize Africana methodologies and explore new developments within African-centered fighting systems, Africana dance, and ritual drumming.[4]

Historian and scholar Kim Hewitt argues that there are some major identical cultural traits expressed in African American cultural aesthetics that intersected with authentic Black martial arts training systems and philosophies. Her theoretical analysis is grounded in "the assumptions that the African diaspora contributed an Africanist presence to African American communities, which culminated in a unique African American expressive style, and that many kinds of martial arts have similar underlying philosophical

[4] The following practitioners have established African-centered martial arts programs. Kilindi Iyi's Tamerrian Institute includes African culture, music, dance, and African spiritual practices. Mfundishi Tayari Casel is the founder and director of the Tayari Casel Martial Arts Academy, Inc., and dances with Kankouran West African Dance Company. Robert W. Young interviewed martial artist Professor Mo in *Black Belt Magazine* (May 2019) titled "52 Blocks Art of Africa, Not 'Art of Incarceration.'" Balogun Ojetade's *Afrikan Martial Arts: Discovering the Warrior Within* (Oakland: Boss Up Inc., 2008) provides examples of documented practices and research not broadly known in the academy. Thomas A. Green's *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2001) offers some inclusion of a global African presence in martial arts.

guidelines."[5] She focuses on variations of African American expressive cultures in the visual, kinesthetic, and musical elements related to the interactive characteristics of Black martial artists, contending "if this connection makes sense theoretically…we may understand the appeal of martial arts to African Americans in the 1960s and 1970s in a new light."[6] The Black martial arts movement was not isolated, but a complementary addition to the values and principles expressed during the Black Power, Black Arts, and African cultural movements occurring during the 1960s and 1970s.

Black martial artists' historiography is not an essentialist or escapist phenomenon solely produced by globalization. Hewitt assumes that Black martial arts fundamentals are a result of the African diaspora, and this viewpoint is supported by Patrick Manning's theoretical approach to the African diaspora and modernity in the modern world. Manning does not believe that modernity is simply a break from the past. He defines the concept:

> Modernity is the condition of life today and in the recent past—a condition filled with triumphs, complexities, and disasters in industry, science, government, and communication, bringing progress, oppression, capitalism, and inequality. Modernity is a condition that is deeply felt and almost universally experienced. Too often, however, it is defined narrowly and then explained in such a fashion as to exclude Black people from it. Modernity is the overall ethos of the modern world, in economic, social, cultural, and other realms; it is an exhilarating but difficult situation.[7]

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[5] Kim Hewitt, "Martial Arts Is Nothing if Not Cool: Speculations on the Intersections between Martial Arts and African American Expressive culture" in *Afro Asia Revolutionary Political & Cultural Connections Between African Americans and Asian Americans* ed. by Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 265-284.

[6] Ibid., 266-267.

[7] Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), xvi-xvii.

Manning contests many of the traditional theories about Africa and modernity and chooses to view the African diaspora in a modern view of modernity that places Black people as agents in the construction of the modern world.[8] He believes African and African diasporic communities should not be reduced to a sociological interpretation of modernity and historical interpretations of the modern world as footnotes, and notes that any form of "the history of Africans and people of African descent, a complex story in itself, lies at the center of the history of all humanity. The tale of modernity cannot fairly be told without full attention to the African continent and peoples of African descent."[9]

Manning categorizes the history of the African diaspora into four dimensions: the lives of Black communities at home and abroad, their relationship to hegemonic powers (both under the hierarchy of slavery and in the unequal circumstances of post-emancipation society), their relations with communities of other racial designators, and the various types of mixing of Black and other communities.[10] His framework establishes a set of guidelines to examine the dialectical response to how African culture changed over time (causation), its relationship to other cultural motifs (settlements), the social

[8] Ibid., xvii. Placing African people and people of the African diaspora as the primary subject provides agency in the discovery of the accomplishments of Africana people within the culture and society that they occupy.

[9] Ibid., xiv.

[10] Ibid., 6. See Joseph Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982) and Michael Gomez, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora: New Approaches to African History* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

construction of race (identity), and the given polity in which Africans have had to navigate.

The examination of Black martial artists in the African diaspora, and in North America particularly, cannot be separated from the foundation of traditional African culture.[11] Manning continues to analyze Black global interactions by framing Black people as the subject being studied by reflecting on the theme of "a history through culture." African culture is the foundation of African diasporic culture and global Black identity. African macroculture "assumes there is an overall set of practices and identities shared by people of Africa and, perhaps, the African diaspora, the term "macroculture" can be problematic because it often refers to vague generalities, with cultural overlaps, without identifying specific cultural characteristics.[12]

Manning continues to explore Africana cultural production by examining microculture, which is often distinctive from national or elite culture. It is within the domain of popular culture, which is often performed in the village, neighborhood, or societal subculture even when they share traits of the same society. These differences developed cultural variations in values, styles, and worldviews. Manning notes, "With time, changing technology and political values gave steadily greater scope to popular

[11] Throughout the African Diaspora, particularly in South Carolina and South America, martial arts systems survived from their parent African culture. Most were disguised as dance or games. Knocking and bucking and capoeira are examples with origins coming from Senegal. These systems exemplify cultural retention from traditional Africa culture.

[12] Ibid., 20.

culture. Larger theaters, expanded print runs, phonographs, motion pictures, radio, audiotapes, televisions, videotapes, and the Internet have bridged the old gap between elite and popular spheres."[13] There are four areas of human creativity that Manning uses to evaluate and define the microculture of Black experiences and cultural production in the form of *expressive culture*, *material culture*, *reflective culture*, and *societal culture.* Expressive culture encompasses the artistic realm of Black culture in visual arts, music, literature, and other interpretations such as African dance and the movement of the body. Material culture includes the creative production of physical products in dress, architecture, and tools. Reflective culture embraces the use of philosophy, knowledge systems, theology, and epistemology. Societal culture teaches the person their role in society, traditions, and customs, along with society's modeling based on age groupings from birth to eldership.

The Origins of African Martial Arts—Myths, Legends, and African History

"History is not everything but it's a starting point"
--John Henrik Clarke[14]

Knowing the origins of African fighting systems and its relationship to African history provides a discourse for separating facts from fiction while building scholarship based on Africana history and African fighting knowledge. Some may think that mythology

[13] Ibid., 21.

[14] Quoted in Roderick Bush, *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 7.

is based on folklore, fables, fiction, or fantasy. However, Wayne Chandler wrote in *Ancient Future the Teachings and Prophetic Wisdom of the Seven Hermetic Laws of Ancient Egypt* that most of ancient history and its approaches are linear while falling prey to Westernized methodologies. It is within the mythology of a culture where a society tells the stories of their cultural heroes and forms "longstanding cultural and political tenets deemed significant by the constituency of a society. They can be found within the folklore and oral histories of societies throughout Africa."[15] Chandler believes that scholarship on mythology studies needs a redefinition of the meaning of myths so it will allow a broad historical perspective than is traditionally applied to ancient belief systems. In "African antiquity, mythology was an ancient mode of thinking," employing African philosophies, spiritual sciences, and epistemologies indigenous to specific African societies.[16]

It is important to understand the relationship between African martial arts, its origins, and its links between antiquity and the present, which created an African historical continuum that can be used to understand the earliest civilizations, including Africa's Kush, Egypt, and Ethiopia, that brought forth knowledge to the world. Ashra Kwesi explains that the African origins of martial arts were known as "Montu Arts." During his Kemet Nu "Know Thyself" study group tours to Egypt, Kwesi explained that African-centered thinking should not use the term "martial arts" in the Eurocentric sense because

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[15] Ofosuwa M. Abiola, *History Dances: Chronicling the History of Traditional Mandinka Dance* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 2.

[16] Wayne B. Chandler, *Ancient Future: The Teachings and Prophetic Wisdom of the Seven Hermetic Laws of Ancient Egypt* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1999), 23.

it refers to Mars, the Roman god of war.[17] The term martial arts is universally accepted for fighting systems throughout the world; however, the term does not fully define the name of the fighting system used within traditional African societies.

During a trip to the Temple of Rameses III Kwesi explained that ancient Egyptians displayed the first African fighting systems and self-defense postures of African fighting forms on the pyramids' walls. Kwesi believes that Kushite soldiers were known to be from Ta-Seti, referred to the "Land of the Bow."[18] On the historical tour, Kwesi explained that African martial arts history could not be fully understood without starting with the Nuba people of the highlands of the Sudan or the Mursi, who are currently known for their *donga* fighting system tracing back to the earliest African civilizations.

Both Thomas Green and Ashra Kwesi reference the iron bracelets with sharpened edges used by Africans known as *bagussa*. The bracelets are found among groups in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. The bracelets were used for self-defense using the arms to block the strikes of attackers using sweeping and blocking movements. Green also records traditional African stick-fighting cultures of the Zulus and the unarmed fighting cultures of African fighting systems. In Nigeria, wrestling was associated with sport and agricultural ceremonies.[19] Essential to the origins of African martial arts is its

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[17] Ashra Kewsi, "Ashra Kewsi Explains the African Origin of Martial Arts (Montu Arts)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHr4ekIq2HQ accessed January 1, 2020.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid. Without argument, modern mixed martial artists from the African continent are the most notable champions of the last decade. Ibrahim Blessing,

connection to African dance. African martial arts culture, dance, and drum culture developed in the early African societies.

Ofosuwa M. Abiola's *History Dances: Chronicling the History of Traditional Mandinka Dance* explains that dance throughout African culture maintains a historical core with a living history that has a "fluid record."[20] African dance systems are inseparable from the African societies that produced them, but are also affected by modernity even while maintaining traditional elements. Abiola contends "that African dances are portrayed within a 'system' adds multilayered dimensions to the potential various uses of this primary resource. These dance systems are comprised of auxiliary items that complement the dance and facilitate a more complete understanding of the dance message." African dance systems are egalitarian in nature and often include music accompanied by singing, drumming hand-clapping, and rituals. Moreover, African martial

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"Top 10 Best African UFC Fighters in the Last Decade" https:// www.africanvibes.com/top-10-best-african-ufc-fighters-in-the-last-decade/. The Hausa people of Nigeria practice*Dambe,* an aggressive boxing style with military origins. Like other martial arts fighting styles, it also has a pre-fight ritual "before entering the sandpit, fighters began with a traditional ritual of having magical herbal mixture rubbed into incisions purposely made up and down fighters' bodies," which is believed to strengthen the fighter. Senegalese wrestling called *Laamb* has roots in the farming and fishing communities of Senegal. Both the *Laamb* and *Dambe* fighting systems utilizes the use of music played by procession instructions. Both fighting systems use drums and songs during the matches. The playing of instruments is not uncommon to other fighting systems found in Japan or China.

[20] Abiola, 16.

arts must be examined within traditional African societies that incorporated the African fighting system into their specific culture, which will give meaning and comprehension of African systems while demonstrating how African dance, drumming, and martial arts "convey messages from the past while creating and preserving the present."[21]

African dance and African drumming were not separate from the combative training incorporated into the ethos of African fighting systems. "The African systems used drums and stringed instruments to create a rhythmic beat for fighting. Warriors, either individually or in groups, practiced using weapons, both for attacking and defensive movements, in conjunction with the rhythm from the percussion instruments."[22] Ritual drumming and percussion usage were essential in training young warriors. African warriors used the dances to develop formational movements, footwork, and effective fighting techniques. "Although these training patterns have been dismissed as 'war dances,' expressive movement rather than martial drills, they actually played a central role in the training of African warriors."[23]

Evidence of African drumming and military campaigns is not heavily documented. However, in the early African communities in North America there were elements of African dance, drumming, and fighting systems that drew their origins directly from continental African societies. The Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739 consisted of enslaved Africans who shared elements of Congolese culture. During the early hours of

[21] Ibid., 16.
[22] Green, *Martial Arts of the World,* 3.

[23] Ibid., 3.

the morning on September 9, 1739, hundreds of enslaved Africans formed a military formation along the banks of the Stono River to plan their escape from bondage. While the White community attended church services, the Congolese started a rebellion that lasted into the night. The coordinated Africans were documented as using their "rhythmic cadence of African drumbeats, combined with cries for 'Liberty!'…as they marched along the river, freeing fellow slaves."[24]

Patrick Manning has documented that "another remarkable expressive-culture tradition that characterizes the Niger-Congo-speaking peoples is polyrhythmic drumming."[25] Manning believes the use of polyrhythmic drumming is an African tradition that dates back many thousands of years. Moreover, different drumming societies created modifications in rhythmic forms, drumming patterns, performance styles, and cultural variations. The "talking drum" is one of the most distinctive drums found in Africa and throughout the African diaspora. The talking drum is used to send signals and messages to neighbor African communities. The talking drum produces a tonal sound with different inflections that imitate intonations using a call-and-response style between the drummer and the receiver or the audience.

During the Stono Rebellion, African drums were used to communicate with other Africans to join the rebellion. The beating of African drums served as a form of literacy

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[24]Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 1999), 1786.

[25] Manning, 49.

and a common African vernacular understood by different ethnic groups from the same region. Within Bantu-speaking groups "ngoma" is used as a generic term for drums. "The ubiquity of this term indicates that the Bantu-speaking migrants had drums four or five thousand years ago. Since the Niger-Congo languages are far more ancient than their Bantu subgroup, it is likely that drums go much further back, as does the tradition of modifying drums and rhythms."[26] The power and the strategic use of African drums in organizing rebellion among Africans led to the enactment of the Negro Act of 1740 that led to the abolition of the talking drum and the use of drumming during the gathering of enslaved Africans. "With the across-the-miles communication that talking drums gave Africans, those who rose up against slavery and utilized that technology stood a good chance of success. To destroy that military power, Europeans said drums—all drums—had to stop."[27]

The study of African martial arts, including that connected to drumming, and Black martial artists in the United States of America must be understood, researched, and studied using an African diasporic methodological approach. Africa must be the intellectual starting point for Africana subjects. Black martial artists in the United States look toward Africa as a source of real or imaginative culture. Black martial artists in North America must be studied within an intersectional paradigm including race, class, gender,

[26] Ibid., 49.
[27] Sule Greg Wilson, *The Drummers Path: Moving the Spirit with Ritual and Traditional Drumming* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1992), 21.

sexuality, and context within its environment.[28] Black martial artists and their specific martial arts systems were developed and formed due to the globalization of Asian martial arts while pursuing the knowledge of Africanity. It is during this junction of syncretized culture that Black martial artists developed authentic Black martial arts systems and Pan African fighting societies incorporating African and Africana cultures.

Ritualistic African Drumming, Martial Arts, and the Movement of the Force

"1989 the number of another summer…sound of the funky drummer"[29]
--Public Enemy

Ritualistic drumming and martial arts cultures have existed for thousands of years. T.J. Desch Obi places ritualistic drumming in the category of performance rituals. He believes that the drumming and dancing by "enslaved Africans and their descendants in North America united and defined themselves as a new community via performance rituals." He contends that "performance activities were nothing short of African-based community-forming and individual-empowering rituals."[30] Babatunde Olatunji states in the *Drummer's Path* that the role of the drum has played a vital part in the history of African people and the "lifestyle of African people at home and those brought to the 'New

[28] Tejumola Olaniyan and James H. Sweet, eds., *The African Diaspora and the Disciplines* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010), 4.

[29] Yusuf Jah, ed., *Lyrics of a Rap Revolutionary: Times Rhymes & Mind of Chuck D, Vol. I: Public Enemy (1987-1994)* (Santa Monica, CA: KingDoMedia, 2005), 158.

[30] T.J. Desch Obi, *Fighting for Honor: The History of African Martial Art in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2008), 93.

World' generations ago. *The Drummer's Path* reminds us that Africans came across the waters with more than one instrument, and that these music and Spirit sciences were used to continue the African celebration of life and sense of unity under strenuous (to say the least!) circumstances in a strange and foreign land."[31] Africa is not the only culture that used drums in its martial arts or societal cultures. In Japan, the taiko drum is characterized by its energetic playing style. The taiko drummer plays hard and fast, involving syncretized movements often identified with Japanese martial arts. In China, the lion and dragon dance also uses Chinese drums to create a combative approach to rhythm. The lion and dragon dancer uses drum patterns to coordinate movements and maneuvers while demonstrating a combative performance.[32]

African culture has also developed long-term drum cultures using a variety of drums. Even though there are unlimited types of African drums, this section focuses on two West African drums called the *djembe* and *dundun* because both of those drums were replicated in the African diaspora. The djembe is dated to the Malian Empire in the thirteenth century, and it was created by Numu blacksmiths. The djembe drum corps includes several drummers and a lead drummer who signal the other drummers with breaks: "Breaks are a signal, a call, or a break in the rhythm, that signifies that something different is to occur next."[33] Rhythms are played simultaneously and in polyrhythmic

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[31] Wilson, *The Drummer's Path,* xi.

[32] Colin McGuire, "The Rhythm of Combat: Understanding the Role of Music in Performances of Traditional Chinese Martial Arts and Lion Dance" in *MUSICultures*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2015), 1-23.

[33] Abiola, 52.

structures. The drummer has an established bond with the dancer. In martial arts, the dancer is a martial arts practitioner who uses ritualistic movements or katas, while following the energetic drummer's rhythms.

Ritualistic drumming and martial arts in the African diaspora were greatly affected by modernity. Modernity can be viewed as a societal shift away from traditional culture and values. However, both traditional African and African American cultures faced societal changes powered by a shift from an agrarian economy toward systems of capitalism, globally competitive markets, and globalization—all of which contained explicit and implicit forms of racism. After World War II, traditional African cultural traditions, Asian martial arts culture, and Black consciousness collided as Black identity became more defined with an emerging cultural movement of civil rights. Master drummer Sule Greg Wilson explains several guiding principles for performing traditional African and African diaspora music. He believes that there are striking parallels in martial arts and African drumming, including the use of breathing, posture, ambidexterity, peripheral awareness, and energy (chi).[34] Wilson also believes that there should be exploratory paths created between martial artists and drummers so that the practitioners can learn from each other.

Ofosuwa Abiola also reiterates the importance and impact of the drummer and dancer bond. African dancers and their "interaction is considered fruitful when the drummer anticipates which steps or body movements the dancer is going to implement before he/she executes them and the drummer plays accents for the movements

[34] Sule Greg Wilson, "Spirit, Drum, Martial Arts, and Time," 9/16/2018, www.sulegregwilson.com/babas-blog, accessed December 1, 2019.

simultaneously as the dancer performs them."[35] Martial arts dance movements are performed in katas, which contain a depth of rhythmic energy. Wilson believes the drummer-martial artist relationship is laid by a rhythmic foundation that creates an energetic flow that allows the martial artists to transcend both time and space. Martial arts rituals are used to create group norms and to promote spirit across the ranks (unity), while instilling discipline and strengthening the subconscious mind.

Wilson defines rituals as a set of practices that institutes an elevated state of mind enhanced by a particular vibe: "Ritual changes brain waves, altering (expanding or narrowing) one's perception of interior and exterior reality. It is a universal power that unifies and instills significance."[36] Some drums are used to enhance spirituality through meditation and concentration. Wilson also believes that "some [drums] are 'born' through ritual."[37] Some drums are made using ritualistic methodologies, such as the Japanese taiko drum, which is created from particular trees, covered with special cattle skins. The Yoruba bata drums can only be played by initiated drummers.

Wilson has witnessed that traditional African music played with string instruments, drumming, or dance invokes a state of stillness similar to Zen Buddhists who uses chants and bells to generate stillness to reach their subconscious mind. Wilson also believes that African dancing can invoke the spirit through the use of music. The vibration of the music subconsciously controls the dancer. If the dancer releases the conscious mind and allows

[35] Abiola, 70.
[36] Wilson, "Spirit, Drum, Martial Arts, and Time," 8.
[37] Ibid., 8.

the subconscious mind to flow, the movement of the dancer becomes effortless. The martial artist's kata is similar to dance; when the kata is performed with a Zen mindset, the energy of the martial artist flows through the kata beyond the conscious mind.

Ritualistic drumming and its connection to martial arts movements create a flow of movement. All martial arts forms or dances require rhythm because without rhythm, the martial arts forms will appear to be disjointed or artless: "Rhythm is an inherent property of movement where, even in daily activities, its coordinating factors are highly and frequently utilized to make work less arduous, go faster, or become pleasant."[38] The work songs of the chain gangs and the Negro spirituals sung during slavery are examples of semiotic movements and rhythm. The drummer inspires the martial artist to concentrate on the meaning of the kata or dance while embracing a deeper meaning of the movements performed. The relationship between the drummer and dancer creates a three-dimensional union consisting of energy, space, and rhythm.

BLACK POWER AND BLACK AGENCY IN MARTIAL ARTS

"Tiger style Tae-Kwon-Do a style, the Black Panthers practiced
—a lens in understanding the Panthers"[39]

The rise of Black consciousness in the 1960s influenced the institutionalization of Black martial arts programs in the United States. The Nation of Islam and the Black

[38] Omofolabo S. Ajayi, *Yoruba Dance: The Semiotics of Movement and Body Attitude in a Nigerian Culture* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1998), 20.

[39] Richard S. Raya, "Might for Right: Martial Arts as a Way to Understanding the Black Panthers." *Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities*, volume 4, Issue 1, Article 7, 2015.

Panther Party advocated for self-defense programs in the Black community. Mary Aziz contends that the call for unarmed self-defense became necessary for the Black community development and for establishing community self-defense programs. Aziz believes the "Nation of Islam used martial arts and unarmed self-defense training to build autonomy in the United States" and the "Nation of Islam was the first Black organization to standardize martial arts training in its programming."[40]

During the years between 1955 and 1965, self-defense imagery, Black martial artists, and Black community self-defense organizations "received great invisibility in African American communities, government briefs, and press coverage."[41] The Nation of Islam served as the model for creating unarmed self-defense in Black Power organizations, community survival programs, and martial arts training academies. After 1965, Black nationalist groups incorporated martial arts and unarmed self-defense as a key feature in community programs*. In the Autobiography of Malcolm X,* Malcolm X was asked "why is your Fruit of Islam being trained in judo and karate?" Malcolm X sensed the underlying influence of White supremacy and recalled saying: "An image of Black men learning anything suggesting self-defense seemed to terrify the white man. I'd turn their question around: 'Why does judo or karate suddenly get so ominous because Black men

[40] Maryam K. Aziz, *Built with Empty Fists: The Rise and Circulation of Black Power Martial Artistry during the Cold War* (Dissertation: University of Michigan, 2020).
[41] Ibid., 40-41.

study it?"[42] Judo and karate were studied across America in the Boy Scouts, at the YMCA, and throughout sports facilities in America. Black Nationalism and the Nation of Islam martial arts training provided a catalyst for promoting a self-sustaining martial arts culture.

Aziz considers "the Nation of Islam [to be] the first Black community and Black Nationalist organization to systematically practice martial arts. It was a progenitor and incubator for martial artists who filtered into other organizations such as the Congress of African People."[43] Other Black revolutionary groups such as the US Organization (1965), the Black Panther Party (1966), and the Black Karate Federation (1969) followed the advice of Malcolm X and the martial arts foundation provided by the Fruits of Islam. Martial arts and self-defense programs were designed for the protection of the Black community and individual self-defense. Aziz made the distinction that "Martial arts did not qualify as combat sports in the Nation of Islam."[44] Self-defense was not a sport; it was intended to be used as a tactic to protect the Nation of Islam against the United States policing forces. More importantly, martial arts training provided the preparation for securing an independent polity, allowed Black men to gain agency over their bodies, and enabled them to attain a sense of physical awareness. As a result, Aziz concluded,

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[42] Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1999), 245-246.

[43] Aziz, 65.

[44] Ibid., 68-69.

"Martial arts lessons became central for the vision of embodiment and Black Power."[45] The Nation of Islam's mantra provided guidance for Black martial arts organizations.

Black Power scholar Richard S. Raya provides insight into the use of martial arts as a tactic of self-defense in the Black Panther Party. Raya was trained and practices Tiger-Style Tae Kwon Do, a style the Black Panthers practiced. Tiger-Style Tae Kwon Do is different from the Olympic style of fighting, particularly because Grandmaster Yun developed it to be a combat-oriented fighting style. Raya considers himself an insider because Tiger-Style Tae Kwon Do is found only in the Bay Area of California. Raya's introspective understanding of Tiger Style is based on the triad of Black Panther knowledge, Bay Area culture, and martial arts training-philosophy. He attests, "there are several ways in which my positionality affords me something of an 'insider' perspective, as well as numerous other ways in which my positionality renders me 'outsider.'"[46]

Raya provided a "historical and philosophical links between the foundations of Tiger-Style TKD and the martial arts/martial philosophy/conception of identity present within the Black Panthers." Raya believes that Tiger-Style Tae Kwon Do connects the historical experiences of the Tiger martial arts community, along with the Black Panthers' attempt to highlight "how the many aspects of the Black Panthers exist as manifestation of unified philosophy: 'The right to exist unassailed.'"[47] Raya's archival research shows

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[45] Ibid., 68-69.

[46] Richard S. Raya, "Might for Right: Martial Arts as a Way to Understand the Black Panthers" in *Tapestries: Interwoven Voices of Local and Global Identities,* volume 4, issue 1 (2015), 1.

[47] Ibid., 2.

that the Black Panthers implemented a martial arts program in the Intercommunal Youth Institute as part of its curriculum and community-based programs. The program offered youth physical fitness, self-defense, and self-discipline. More importantly, Tiger-Style Tae Kwon Do influenced a Black fighting style unique to Oakland.

Black Power martial arts culture in California provides a West Coast historical narrative unknown to the general public. Community-based martial arts and Black Power identity also entered popular culture in the 1970s. A scene from *Enter the Dragon* featured famed Black martial artist Jim Kelly with Steve Muhammad and Donnie Williams, the founders of the Black Karate Federation (BKF). Their unique style of kempo karate is also represented by their mission and iconic Black nationalist karate patch. BKF promoted Black pride within Black martial arts culture and was formed to provide advocacy in sport karate tournaments to fight against racism in the sport. Steven Sanders also has links to the Nation of Islam where he became a member in 1972 and changed his name to Steve Muhammad. BKF is best known for the iconography of their Black Power karate patch. The patch is a gold fist with a red, black, and green band with a cobra at the forefront. The initials BFK are in red and black at the bottom of the patch symbolizing Black power and pride. Black martial arts culture did not start with the Black Power Movement. However, the rise in Black consciousness provided the foundation for forming unarmed self-defense communities and institutionalizing a Black martial arts culture.

The Authenticity of Black Marital Arts Systems in the United States of America

"like a swordfight. You must think first, before you move"
-- "The Mystery of Chessboxin"
Enter the Wu-Tang: 36 Chambers [48]

Black martial art systems and practices have a long heritage and legacy rooted in traditional African fighting systems. Some Black martial artists have adopted or rediscovered traditional African fighting systems and implemented them into new martial arts systems with defined Africana fighting philosophies. In the book *Black Heroes of the Martial Arts,* acclaimed Black martial artist and actor Ron Van Clief asks the question, "Who are the Black heroes of the martial arts?"[49] For most Black martial artists, this question could be answered in two ways. First, they would name the teachers and masters they personally know and then identify with those they saw in the movies.

The 1970s witnessed the impact of Chinese martial arts films and the rise of the African-centered thought movement. Bruce Lee's 1973 release of *Enter the Dragon* featuring African American martial artists Jim Kelly and the 1979 release of the *Game of Death* featuring Kareem Abdul Jabbar placed Black martial artists in the "latest instances of popular cultural revolution as well as its aesthetic link to the decolonizing subjectivity

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[48] Wu-Tang Clan, *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)* "Da Mystery of Chessboxin" https://ohhla.com/anonymous/wu_tang/enter_wu/mystery.wtg.txt.

[49] Ron Van Clief, *The Black Heroes of the Martial Arts* (A & B Publishers Group, 1996), inside front cover.

in the latest stage of globalization."[50] Both films intersected the imagination of Black youth coming of age in the embryonic years of hip hop culture. Rap group Public Enemy used martial arts dance drills in the music video "Fight the Power," in which the drill team Security of the First World (S1W) used drill formations learned from the Nation of Islam (Fruits of Islam), while implementing martial arts dance moves. Rap group Wu Tang Clan also frequently utilized martial arts forms in their music videos.

M. T. Kato explained that the art forms of both *Jeet Kune Do* and hip hop share the same cultural expressions: "The flourishing individual expressions in hip hop and *Jeet Kung Do* are well embedded in the cultural foundations and historical legacies: the African culture for hip hop and Chinese culture for *Jeet Kung Do*."[51] Black martial artists were introduced to Asian martial arts by the post-World War II transnational Asian communities. However, by the end of the 1960s, a younger generation of Black martial artists had begun to implement Black consciousness into their worldview. Black martial artists used Asian martial arts to transition into African-centered martial arts and created authentic Black martial arts systems. At the intersection of Black martial arts exploration with traditional African dance, drum, and fighting cultures, a new authentic African-centered martial arts culture emerged in the United States of America.

[50] M.T. Kato, *From Kung Fu to Hip Hop: Globalization, Revolution, and Popular Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 171.

[51] Ibid., 177.

Before I started to pursue a scholarly exploration of Black martial arts systems, I purchased a VHS tape titled *The World of African Martial Arts* from a Black bookstore in Norfolk, Virginia, in the early 2000s featuring the teachings of Kilindi Iyi, master instructor of the Ta-Merrian Institute in Detroit, Michigan. I had no idea at the time that the study of the VHS tape would inspire or expand my interest in the relationship between martial arts, African drumming, martial dance movements, and African philosophy.[52] Iyi's examination of African fighting systems reconnects Black martial artists to the traditional African fighting systems through dance, African drumming, philosophy, and the medicinal sciences of African traditional herbal medicine. Iyi's unique perspective infuses African traditional fighting cultures with Black consciousness.

In 2016, Jared Ball interviewed Iyi on his podcast *I Mix What I Like*. Iyi explained that his interest in the African martial fighting sciences coincided with the Black Power movement and influenced his interest in seeking an African identity.[53] Iyi attests that one of the most impactful teachers he met was Baba Ishangi, the founder of the Ishangi Family Dancers. It is during that connection in his pursuit for authentic African culture where his African consciousness was elevated by learning the foundation of African

[52] See Kilindi Iyi, "Empty Hands: World of African Martial Arts intro" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSCpiyAyQ_0, see "Kung Fu Extravaganza at Howard University African Martial Arts" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqYKuIXDTy4, accessed January 1, 2020.

[53] Jared Ball, "Ahati Kilindi Iyi and the African Fighting Sciences," June 16, 2013. https://imixwhatilike.org/2013/06/16/kilindi/ accessed January 25, 2020.

dance. Ishangi founded the Sankofa Society in 1973 in New York. The Ishangi African Dancers performed at the New York World's Fair in 1965 and twice for the World Body of the United Nations in 1965 and 1980. The Ishangi African Dancers are pioneers and cultural ambassadors in spreading African culture, history, philosophy, and African dance.

Iyi's pursuit of African fighting sciences caused him to seek out African martial arts practitioners from various African communities he met in America. He met a South African friend named Zukele, who taught him Zulu stick fighting, and he studied the Egyptian martial arts naboot after meeting Mohammad, a teacher of the Egyptian martial arts. Moreover, it was Iyi's travels to Senegal, Ghana, and Gambia and his association with Baba Adeboye from Nigeria who provided insight into Nigerian martial arts. Iyi learned that African martial arts systems were taught and learned differently in African societies than in other martial arts cultures. African martial arts training was not separate from the culture it was embedded within the daily life activities of the student.

It is customary in African American culture for young boys to engage in play fighting called slap-boxing. Slap-boxing is a playful free-form fight with two pugilists who attempt to touch their opponent's face with an open hand instead of a closed fist. The skills of the boys in the group determine an informal ranking order within the group. Slap-boxing is an informal method to learn or improve boxing skills and prepares the boys for self-defense using boxing skills. The same type of informal fighting or self-defense training can be found among the Kunene pastoral societies in Namibia. African pastoral societies are one example of how African martial arts training is embedded within African society's daily life.

The herding societies of the Kunene start training boys as early as four or five years old to manage calves and cattle greater in size and weight than themselves. The interaction with the herd at an early age trains the boys to "recognize individual pastoralists as dominant; yet, the natural tendency of cattle to continuously test those above them as they grew stronger necessitated the maintenance of dominance through aggressive behaviors with sticks."[54] Herding sticks are the first tool used in herding, but they are also used as a weapon. Herding training provided the foundation for Kunene stick-fighting culture. Herding boys spend a long time idle when watching the herd during the day. During that idle time the boys used the long hours to establish their own hierarchy among themselves through stick fighting matches: "These matches were part of a lifelong maintenance of mastery of stick fighting through both the throwing of sticks and dueling with them," and the practice allowed younger boys who were more skilled "to rise in the pecking order of the herd."[55]

T.J. Desch Obi's research of the pastoral communities supports Kilindi Iyi's experiences of witnessing the relationship between African culture and combative training. In African societies the conventional term "martial arts" does not describe the combative training learned through the daily rituals, rites of passages, or work. Among pastoral young men the demonstration of combative skills played a role in courting behaviors to gain favor from young women. A game called *onhandeka* "consisted of fights between pairs of boys who wished to show off before the girls. Each pair fought another

[54] Obi, 32.
[55] Ibid., 31.

pair with knobkerrie sticks an even number of rounds, odd numbers being unlucky, until the vanquished pairs admitted defeat. Then each victor performed a jumping dance, called by the name of a favorite warrior, and challenged all other boys of his age group to fight him."[56] Stick fighting training also prepared the males to fight as a coordinated unit when they became adult soldiers.

Iyi's experiences studying different African combative sciences allowed him to develop a unique martial arts perspective blending Africa's systems to include the different martial dance moves learned through different African dance systems. The African dance to Ogun and its relationship connecting stick fighting and using the machete is an example. Within Iyi's training were African combative elements learned from Akan, the Yoruba, or Hausa, and Mende cultures. He described this syncretism: "I blend them all together. I see them as one and that's my own personal viewpoint as far as the martial arts of Africa."[57] The blending of African martial arts, philosophy, and cultures lead Iyi to develop the Ta-Merrian Institute.

Iyi chose the name of the Ta-Merrian Institute to honor an ancient African empire called Ta-Merri. Ta-Merri means "the loving earth" and it also represents the Kemetian

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[56] Ibid., 33.

[57] Thomas A. Green, "African Roots in the Martial Arts: An Interview with Kilindi Iyi." *InYo: Journal of Alternative Perspectives on the Martial Arts and Sciences,* Nov. 2004. https://ejmas.com/jalt/2004jalt/jcsart_green_1104.html, accessed December 1, 2019.

methodology of Ansar which is "the house of resurrection."[58] Kemetian culture is an African-centered approach to tracing traditional African cultures origins to the Nile Valley civilizations and Kemet (Ancient Egypt) as its foundation. The concept of an African martial arts culture in the United States or in Africa serves to resurrect African martial arts elements, which are as universally compatible with the martial arts of Japan, China, or Korea. Iyi's vision was to make African martial arts a part of African American martial arts culture as a relentless and viable part of the Black martial arts lexicon. Essentially, Iyi wanted to connect Africa to the African diaspora by encouraging Black martial artists to study African martial arts as a rich source for martial arts growth and enhancement.

Black martial arts culture has taken on many different dimensions within Black life. Martial arts culture also intersects Black activist circles and community activism. Balogun Ojetade, the founder of the Afrikan Martial Arts Institute and a Yoruba Ifa priest, combines West African martial systems and spirituality under the name *Egbe Ogun,* while seeking to promote African histories and culture. The goal of Ojetade's institute was to "promote and preserve the traditional indigenous martial arts of Afrika, as conveyed through the system of Egbe Ogun; to focus on adults as well as children, in our educational activities; and to share the history and cultures of Afrika with our community, through demonstrations, lectures, workshops, classes, films, plays, and music."[59]

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Afrikan Martial Arts Institute, Siafu Movement https://www.thepeoplesarmy.org/afrikanmartialarts, accessed January 22, 2020.

The Afrikan Martial Arts Institute intended to build a strong community of martial artists who were knowledgeable, skilled practitioners of indigenous African martial arts or martial arts of the African diaspora. Inclusive within the martial arts system is the ability to sing, play the [African] instruments, execute the movements and techniques, and have knowledge of the roots, rituals, and traditions of Afrikan and Diasporan martial arts." The Egbe Ogun system utilizes four basic applications in its system: 1) Polyrhythmic application, 2) the Unbroken Circle, 3) The Wind Has One Name, and 4) Waste No Part of the Animal.

The *polyrhythmic application* is similar to the drum patterns used by African drummers. Polyrhythmic patterns are also indigenous to African American music, seeking to apply multiple strike patterns simultaneously in an offensive or defensive attack. In African American musical and religious communities, the "call and response" technique is often used to create interaction between the caller and responder. The *unbroken circle* seeks to use the opponent's force against him while adapting to the actions and rhythms of the opponent to create a never-ending circle of offense and defense. The *wind has no name* prepares the martial artists to recognize finite angles and to "further simplify combat by teaching that every block is a strike, and every strike is a block. Thus, when an Afrikan martial artist learns an offensive technique, he has, in effect learned a defensive technique."[60] The application of *waste no part of the animal* uses the philosophy

[60] Ibid.

of economy of motion. In other words, a strike to the chin can be followed by a strike with an elbow to the chin.

Inclusive to the Egbe Ogun martial arts system is the relationship between martial arts and African spirituality. Balogun Ojetade teaches a double sword technique that also includes gripping and unarmed techniques against bladed weapons. In the Ifa spiritual system, Ogun is closely related to warfare. The craft of African blacksmiths who were Yoruba often gave Ogun rituals to protect their weapons during battle. Ogun statues are often seen with Ogun holding the sword. The Afrikan Martial Arts Institute is not a standalone organization; rather, it is a part of several organizations that provide the foundation for the Siafu Movement. This brings activism and martial arts under the umbrella of Black community activism. The Siafu or FTP Movement is "built on love, respect, loyalty, discipline, and principled unity. The mission is to raise political awareness and engage and inspire people to take an active role in building the community."[61] The African-centered philosophy teaches Black citizens how to survive beyond basic self-defense systems or martial arts. The Siafu Movement is a holistic, African-centered survival movement that includes the Feed the People program, Mama's Army, Siafu Youth Corps, and the Urban Survival Preparedness Institute are the programs that provide self-reliance and preparedness training as the foundation for Black martial culture.

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[61] FTP Movement, *Siafu Movement*, https://www.thepeoplesarmy.org/ftpmovement, accessed January 26, 2020.

CONCLUSION

"African Warriors Marooned in the Swamp" – Latif Tarik[62]

African diasporic scholarship has explored and researched many cultural traits of Africana culture. However, Black martial arts systems in the United States and their connection to African cultures whether they were adopted or rediscovered, is a recent phenomenon. Captured Africans brought to the United States their fighting systems, forms, tactics, and African martial arts culture. Obi explained, "African combat traditions in the Americas, where martial arts continued to play a key role in the society of enslaved Africans, albeit in radically new ways."[63]

Due to the volatile nature of slavery, African fighting sciences were taught in secret within maroon communities, performance circles, ritualistic initiations, and secret societies. The most skilled practitioners were known by rank within the enslaved

[62] This quotation by Latif Tarik is based on studying marooned societies on the Atlantic Coast, particularly the Maroons of the Dismal Swamp. Maroons were often runaways who learned combative skills in Africa or improvised skills adoptable in the New World.

[63] Obi, 13.

community. The movie *Daughters of the Dust* featured the legendary Igbo Landing, a community of captured Africans with roots in the Biafran fighting traditions. The film contains several scenes where two Igbo descendants are wrestling. African wrestling styles varied by regions: Wolof *laamb*, Igbo *mgba*, or Yoruba *gidigbo,* "each with distinctive techniques and formats" passed down from the ancestors to younger generations within the enslaved community.[64] As African wrestling techniques transformed throughout the generations, new styles were created. The most popular form was the "kicking a wrap" style, where practitioners were known to be practicing well into the twentieth century.

Most modern-day Black martial artists did not know about their African military utility or martial arts culture when most began to practice Asian martial arts. However, the Black Power Movement, African Independence Movement, and a return to traditional African culture enticed some Black martial artists also to return to the source of African fighting sciences. One of the tenets of traditional African diaspora studies is the "Return to Africa."[65] It was traditional African practitioners that most sought out to teach them African martial arts. Black martial artists did not abandon Asian martial arts but used African and Asian martial arts to create new and authentic Black fighting systems. Since the days of Black martial artists such as Jim Kelly, Grandmaster Moses Powell,

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[64] Ibid., 82.

[65] See Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*.

Grandmaster Duncan, and Billy Blanks along with movie stars such as Wesley Snipes and Michael Jai White, martial arts have been a part of Black popular culture.

Black martial arts scholarship is forcing Black martial art culture to be recognized within the broader spectrum of American popular culture. Black martial arts culture is legendary and has lived in the margins of society before scholars and researchers recognized its origins, authenticity, and staying power. Professor Mo, also known as Mahaliel Bethea, attests that Black American cultural innovation laid the foundation for 52 hand blocks, a Black martial arts system, commonly seen in Wu-tang Clan's rap videos and utilized by some mixed martial artists. Professor Mo believes the system is derived from the genetic memory of Black people.

Professor Mo understands historically that "a lot of fighting systems were used in fights that took place on plantations. Plantation owners would take their slaves from place to place and let people gamble on the fights. So slaves did have a form of fighting."[66] Black martial arts culture has embraced its African roots, while experiencing various levels of modernity. Many African cultural roots found their way back into Black martial arts culture. African dance and drum culture has become essential to elevating Black consciousness and in inciting African sensibilities. African dance and drummer cultures have also experienced changes in modernity, while staying grounded in traditional African drum and dance cultures.

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[66] Robert W. Young, "52 Blocks: Art of Africa, Not 'Art of Incarceration,'" https://blackbeltmag.com/arts/western-european-arts/professor-mo-everything-to-know-about-52-blocks.

The challenge of studying Black martial arts systems and creating scholarship and historiography is similar to studying African dance history. Ofosuwa Abiola writes that the challenge of writing an African dance history is often difficult because the wealth of African history is housed within traditional African culture and, "consequently, the dances can be used as an African-derived primary source for writing African history."[67] The same can be said about Black martial art systems in North America. Recent scholarship and Black martial arts research must use interdisciplinary historiography in African diaspora studies, African history, cultural anthropology, performance studies, and field research. The practitioners of Black martial arts, its experts, and master teachers cannot be limited to the interpretations of academicians.

In the media, most people see only Asian martial arts as being legitimate forms of martial arts systems. However, traditional African martial arts are being sought out by other martial artists outside of Africa. The 52-hand block system, which has its origins in New York City, also has practitioners in Europe. Many scholars are slowly accepting the research of Black fighting systems with origins in Africa. Scholars such as Michael Gomez, John Thornton, and T.J. Desch Obi have laid the foundation for historical inquiry.

This essay attempts to show how Black martial arts systems in the modern era have African roots, utilize Africanity, and display authentic martial arts principles rooted in a Black consciousness with Africana sensibilities. Several cultural streams in the media, music, performance arts, and the fighting arts have contributed to the growth of Black

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[67] Abiola, 2.

martial artists. Despite the popularity of Mike Tyson in Chinese martial arts movies, the martial arts roles of Wesley Snipes and Michael Jai White, Black martial artists have not reached the popularity of Chinese martial artists in the film industry.

However, the subculture of Black martial artists is creating a resurrection of the African warrior spirit. Black martial arts culture provides the Black community with a mechanism to defend themselves, and more importantly, the higher principles associated with martial arts instill valuable principles embedded within the warrior code. A Japanese proverb says, "For a Samurai to be brave he must have a bit of Black blood."[68] If this proverb is true, it means that throughout the ages the African warrior and the Black martial artists have always engaged and sustained a martial culture.[69] The African martial artist has received a reemergence in international popular culture. The book *African Samurai The True Story of Yasuke, a Legendary Black Warrior in Feudal Japan* and the Netflix anime series, *Yasuke* has created a great interest in Yasuke's life. Little is known

[68] Runoko Rashidi, *The Global African Community: Travel Notes* (San Antonio: Runoko Rashidi, 2005), 32; Geoffrey Girard and Thomas Lockley's *African Samurai: The True Story of Yasuke, a Legendary Black Warrior in Feudal Japan,* 2019; " Yasuke: The Legendary the African Samurai," and N Series, Anime Series, *Yasuke* .

[69] This quote has been a myth for years. However in the recent book *African Samurai: The True Story of Yasuke, a Legendary Black Warrior in Feudal Japan* (2021) and the Netflix anime series *Yasuke* dispels the myth and places the Black samurai experience in historical context. Race and identity has a long history, and the Black/ African interaction is one that has had some influence from the time of Yasuke to today's modern Japan. The article "Japan's Diverse Olympic Stars Reflect a Country That's Changing (Slowly), https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/24/world/asia/japan-olympics-diversity.html.

about the life of Yasuke before arriving in Japan in the 1500s, as one biography notes, "Most Japanese people had never seen an African man before. Some believed he was a god. Others saw him as the black-skinned Buddha."[70] The mythology of the Black martial artist is brought to life and provide additional perspectives to the African origins of martial arts and the Black experience.

Discussion Questions

1. What is Patrick Manning's understanding between the relationship of African American culture and African Diasporic culture? Why should readers examine Black martial artists in North America within the foundation of traditional African culture?

2. Explain the relationship between martial arts and ritualistic drumming. How did modernity affect African Diaspora culture, particularly African martial arts and drumming?

3. The Nation of Islam was the first Black organization to implement unarmed self-defense training in their organization, and Malcolm X advocated for Black people to learn Judo and Karate. Why do you think Black communities embraced martial arts during the Black Power Movement? Name some examples from the essay of Black martial artists who inspired Black consciousness and social activism.

Writing Prompt

In a 500-word essay that asserts your main point, evaluates evidence, and sets forth an argument in a clear, concise, and compelling manner, explain how has this chapter changed your understanding or perception of African American participation in American martial arts culture.

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[70] Thomas and Lockely and Geoffrey Girard, *African Samurai The True Story of Yasuke, a Legendary Black Warrior in Feudal Japan* (Hanover Square Press: Ontario, 2021). Quote is on the back cover of the book.

Chapter 17

Womanifesto: Historicizing the Literary Activism of Claudia Jones and Assata Shakur

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Introduction

Some poetic language deserves claps, a few snaps, and often verbal praise. Some poetry elicits an immediate audience reaction while it also transcends the present moment by speaking for an entire community at a specific historical milestone. The poetry of Black women activists can be found in the literature of the Black Arts Movement, Civil Rights Movement, and the global Black Communist Movement. Individually and collectively, these separate movements represent the needs of the African Diaspora in the twentieth century. In 1981, Joseph Harris and colleagues defined the African Diaspora as "a community with an identity linking them to a geographical area of origin; similar physical attributes, derivative cultural traditions, a passionate commitment due to a common social condition, to a set of ideals, in the case of Africans and their Diaspora, of racial justice and human rights."[1] The content and genres of writing within the African Diaspora include revolutionary writings, autobiographical writings, prison writings, and published essays. While most of these genres are straightforward, prison writing has been referred to as

[1] Joseph E. Harris, "African Diaspora Studies: Some International Dimensions," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1996), 6-8.

the "writing of the political activist who uses the space of incarceration and the time of detention to reflect on the conditions of being incarcerated, the political conditions of the state, and the nature of the human condition and his/her life up to that point."[2]

The cases of Assata Shakur and Claudia Jones are similar with respect to the themes of FBI investigation, incarceration, literature, and Black women's resistance. While Jones's case prefigures Shakur's, their lives share remarkable similarities. Both women fall under the umbrella of Black woman activists, incarcerated activists, and prison literary activists who have challenged racism, capitalism, and the justice system in the United States and abroad. Jones was imprisoned under the Smith Act for her communist involvement in the U.S., while Shakur was charged with several crimes, including a conviction of a state trooper's murder in New Jersey. The stories of both women align with the objectives and goals of struggling for liberation. It is also noteworthy that Jones was later exiled to London, and Shakur escaped to find asylum in Cuba.

The poetry written by Claudia Jones and Assata Shakur during and after the time they were incarcerated represents resistance, the key feature of the discussion and scholarship of Africana women who continue the Black Radical Tradition. Within the poetry produced by Jones and Shakur are the historical themes surrounding their activism and literature. Examining Black radical women's literature within the African Diaspora not only highlights the extraordinary writings of these women, but also shares their voices

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[2]Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 103.

and provides readers with a memory of the history they documented. Such an examination reveals their radical ideas, thoughts, motives, and, in most cases, the actions in which women engaged during critical moments in the history of the African Diaspora. It should be noted that throughout this chapter the designation of *Africana* refers to people of African descent in the Diaspora, and the terms Black, African, and Africana are interchangeable within this chapter.

CLAUDIA JONES

Claudia Vera Cumberbatch was born in Belmont, Port of Spain (the capital city of Trinidad and Tobago) on February 15, 1915. Her family moved to Harlem, New York, when she was nine years old. Jones's mother died five years after moving to Harlem, leaving her father to work and support the family. By conventional standards, her life in Harlem was essentially "normal." However, she grew up in poor living conditions, and she contracted tuberculosis at an early age and sustained major damage to her lungs. She would suffer from this condition for the rest of her life. Jones was known as a bright student, but instead of attending college after graduating from high school as she had wished, she worked in a laundry primarily due to her immigrant status.[3]

The poverty she experienced at a young age, combined with having to work instead of attending college, contributed to her developing the mindset and consciousness necessary to address issues facing Black people. For instance, as a youth,

[3] Carole Boyce Davies, ed. *Claudia Jones: Beyond Containment* (Oxfordshire, UK: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited, 2011), 190.

Jones joined the Scottsboro Nine Movement in 1936. During this time, at the age of 18, she was introduced to the Young Communist League, which later became the American Youth for Democracy. As a part of the Women's Commission of the Communist Party, she soon found herself at the center of the struggle. During her time in the party, she became the secretary of the organization, as well as a prominent figure within the movement.[4] Jones can accurately be described as a radical historical figure, Black Nationalist, political activist, radical journalist, and a Black Communist. She explained her reasons for becoming a Communist:

> From an early age, like most native Negro Americans and with the additional penalty of being foreign born and a Negro in the United States, I experienced the indignity of second-class citizenship in the U.S. My parents emigrated from the West Indies in 1924 in the hope of finding greater economic opportunity and freedom to rear their children. But what I found instead in the U.S. was not only economic poverty for the working-class, but the special brand of American racism—Jim Crow.[5]

Jones's political activism reflected the multi-faceted themes of women's rights, journalism, prison, deportation, and the struggle against White supremacy. Her activism displayed anti-imperialism, Marxist/Leninist theory, and the intersectionality of a Black woman's empowerment. Jones's Black internationalism can be placed within the same discourse as that of other well-known Black women such as Eslanda Robeson, Ella Baker, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Audley "Queen Mother" Moore. Her political life provides a glimpse of Black artists' efforts prior to the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s. For instance, Jones's writings published in the *West Indian Gazette* and her founding of the

[4] Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, 68.
[5] Davies, *Claudia Jones*, 17.

Notting Hill Carnival in London demonstrate how Black art and literature operated as a much-needed form of expression against White supremacy on an international scale. As an Afro-Caribbean, her identity can be compared to figures such as Stokely Carmichael and Walter Rodney. Although some might question this characterization because Jones was a Black woman, very few women have been considered a radical intellectual on the forefront. Her radicalism is physically illustrated by where she is buried. Jones's gravesite is positioned literally left of Karl Marx in Highgate Cemetery in London, England, offering a concrete example of what many scholars have emphasized about Jones's political thinking being to the left of Karl Marx.

Jones was active in Harlem during the same time as Malcolm X and other Civil Rights figures, which furthers emphasizes the role she played in connection with other prominent activists. Because she lived in three distinct spaces within the African Diaspora (her childhood in Trinidad, activism in the United States, and relationship with the Afro-Caribbean community in London), Jones's international influence is remembered differently in each of these spaces.[6]

THE POETRY OF CLAUDIA JONES

Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* provides a critical analysis of the ideological foundation of the European construct referred to as Marxism. Marxism, as a theory and practice, is embedded in the

[6] Ibid., xxiv; Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 55.

ideals of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and their challenge to the bourgeoisie in Europe.[7] Robinson's approach and contributions to this knowledge address the limitations of the Eurocentric radical ideology laid out by Karl Marx. While Robinson acknowledges the roots of radicalism are not limited to Europe and America, he argues that Black resistance to enslavement and oppression in the Caribbean, the Americas, and Africa are the foundations of Black radicalism. However, Robinson's theory of Black Marxism leaves women out of the discourse, similar to how Karl Marx omits women from his analyses of the economic condition of workers. His contributions to Marxist theory focus only upon prominent *male* figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, and Richard Wright. Yet, during the twentieth century, women such as Claudia Jones contributed greatly to the intellectual dialogue of African struggle throughout the world. For instance, while incarcerated, Claudia Jones used her poetry to reflect upon the issues of the world and to express and release her emotions. As a West Indian who fought for women's rights and the rights of the working class, her involvement in the Communist Party was intended to liberate victims of capitalism, sexism, and classism.

To encourage readers to resist lynching and racial oppression, Jones makes her demands known in her poem "Lament for Emmet Till," written in 1955. Emmett Till was a 14-year-old boy who was visiting his family in Mississippi for the summer. While there, he was lynched and beaten until he was unrecognizable—his only "crime" having been that he allegedly whistled at a White woman. His well-known murder ignited the Civil Rights Movement in America. Jones writes:

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[7] Robinson, xii.

Cry lynch—murder!
Sear the land
Raise fists—in more than anger bands![8]

In this stanza, Jones writes of the lynching of Till and the action of Civil Rights supporters who raised their fists in protest of his treatment. In the mid-1950s, African Americans, particularly in the South, were still being lynched. This incident ignited the Civil Rights Movement and inspired many prominent figures to lead a call to action against lynching and other brutality directed at African people in America. Jones also addresses specific people in the poem, including Emmett's mother, who wanted her son to have an open casket so the world could see what they had done to her child. Jones writes:

Mother, mother—you who bore
Son from womb of sorrow know
White washed justice sure will reap
More than it can ever sow…

Uncle, uncle who stood
Firm-hand-in jim crow dock of wood
Facing lynchers eye for eye
Meeting sadism of parading child

People, people, you who swore
Vengeance for this brutal hour
Make your unity soar above strife
To swiftly avenge Young Emmet Till's life![9]

These three stanzas speak to Emmett's mother, uncle, and supporters who participated in protest and activism to draw attention to the violent criminal actions of the murderers who had beaten and lynched Emmett, closing in a demand that the culprits be brought

[8] Davies, *Claudia Jones*, 192.
[9] Ibid., 192.

to justice. Speaking to the justice system and making it clear that many people felt strongly about these issues, Jones encourages them to find unity within this situation and to "avenge Young Emmet [*sic*] Till's life." This poem mirrors the song "Strange Fruit" by Billie Holiday. That song speaks to the racism of America and the lynchings of Black bodies that peaked in the South near the beginning of the twentieth century. In the same vein, Holiday's lyrics reflect the inhumane treatment of Black Americans and highlight the issues within the Jim Crow South. As with "Strange Fruit," Jones's poetry can be used as a historical reference to the Civil Rights Movement and to Black activism during this time. Jones here provides a unique approach to the documentation of history through poetry, and she continues this tradition throughout the time she was incarcerated.[10]

The racial tension within the United States that was expressed so clearly in the early 1960s was the product of countless injustices experienced by African Americans since the first Africans were brought to North America. Because of the pain and disappointment, she endured in the United States, Jones's life provides an example of the harsh treatment experienced by millions of African Diasporans in America. As a Trinidadian woman, her connections to many racially inspired events provided her with a different perspective that challenged and criticized the history of oppression in the world. With hopes of changing this reality, Jones's activism highlights the work of immigrants or entities who she feels had done well. The poem "Yenan—Cradle of the Revolution" refers to the Chinese revolution and how it was viewed as a Communist dream for a better

[10] Ibid., 83.

society. She wrote this poem in August 1964 as she returned from a two-day visit to Yenan, China. The poem captures her belief in socialism, especially in her admiration for what she perceived as socialist teachings and its inspiration of unity among the oppressed.[11]

Scholars Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esche provided the connection between Black activism and the Chinese Revolution of 1949: "How black radicals came to see China as the beacon of Third World revolution and Mao Zedong thought as a guidepost is a complicated and fascinating story involving literally dozens of organizations and covering much of the world—from the ghettos of North America to the African countryside." Kelley and Esche referred to a hip-hop song by The Coup that references *The Communist Manifesto* and revolutionary icons such as Mao Zedong, Kwame Nkrumah, and H. Rap Brown. Kelley and Esche explained that in Harlem during the 1960s and early 1970s, it seemed as though everyone had a copy of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*.[12]

China supported the Black effort in the U.S., and many Black radical leaders visited China and returned as transformed African Americans. This Black international experience provided Black activists with allies in a space where they felt "a sensation of freedom." Examining figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Elaine Brown, and Huey P. Newton, Kelley and Esche explored the impact of Maoist thought and the People's Republic of China on Black radical movements from the 1950s to the mid-1970s: "China offered black

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[11] Ibid., 83.
[12] Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 1 (1999), 8.

radicals a 'colored,' or Third World Marxist model that enabled them to challenge a white and Western vision of class struggle—a model that they shaped and reshaped to suit their own cultural and political realities."[13] Furthermore, the solidarity of China to the civil rights struggle of African Americans, presents a Black international link outside of the Eurocentric cultural traditions. Jones continues in her poem "Yenan—Cradle of the Revolution":

> What then turned the tide?
> What organized the people
> Simple in their aspirations
> And desires, into a fighting fist
> To crush forever their Chiangs
> Their war-lords, backed
> By the imperialist might of
> US dollars and many-flagged guns.
>
> The fight to win and
> Change the mind of Man
> Against the corruption of centuries
> Of feudal-bourgeois, capitalist ideas
> The fusion of courage and clarity
> Of polemics against misleaders[14]

Robeson Taj Frazier provides an in-depth investigation of prominent African American radical activists traveling and living in China. Frazier explains why so many Black radicals reached out to China during this crucial period of African American history, and why China found radical and socialist Black leaders to be viable partners in their own struggle for economic and political development during the Cold War. Chinese leaders placed China as the "leader of the anti-imperialist world struggle against capitalism, U.S.

[13] Kelley and Esch, 8.
[14] Davies, *Claudia Jones*, 155.

Empire, and white supremacy."[15] However, there were contradictions. China was not Black, and racism and anti-Black sentiments were common Chinese perceptions of Black people. Furthermore, Frazier shares more concrete narratives of activists such as Vicki Garvin, who taught English in China from 1964 to 1971, along with Shirley Graham Du Bois, Robert Williams, and several others. Jones, as a Black international figure, developed connections with leaders throughout the world during the time when she was working to build the Communist party. This work reflects throughout the rest of her poetry as well, especially when she wrote in solidarity with another woman involved in the struggle.[16]

In the 1955 poem "For Consuela—Anti-Fascista," Jones writes to her sister-comrade Blanca Consuela Torresola, a Puerto Rican activist serving four years in the Federal Reformatory for Women in Alderson, Virginia. Upon completion of the four-year sentence in the U.S., Torresola faced a 140-year term in Puerto Rico for her participation in the Puerto Rican independence struggle. Describing Torresola as an anti-fascist demonstrates her leftist agenda to fight for full independence for the island. She begins the poem by making a connection to their mirroring struggles. Jones writes:

> It seems I knew you long before our common ties—of conscious choice
> Threw under single skies, those like us
> Who, fused by our mold
> Became their targets, as of old

[15] Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 29.
[16] Davies, *Claudia Jones*, 33.

Referring to Torresola as her sister, Jones expresses their connection with the common struggle against colonial powers. Although they represent two different regions, their common ties are reflected in their activism:

> Oh wondrous Spanish sister
> Long-locked from all your care
> Listen—while I tell you what you strain to hear
> And beckon all from far and near

In the last stanza, Jones again affirms the anti-fascist sisterhood between them. She references her vision of the world as a better place in the line "eyes turn to stars." This image brings together the hope that each of them had within their struggles. Realizing that it was always a constant fight, they had to remain diligent and focused. By acknowledging Terresola's "source of spirit and of will," Jones carries this same courage with her to London, and, in recognizing that "their justice" can never deter the struggle for liberation, she wrote:

> O anti-fascist sister—you whose eyes turn to stars still
> I've learned your wondrous secret—source of spirit and of will
> I've learned that what sustains your heart—mind and peace of soul
> Is knowledge that their justice—can never reach its goal.[17]

On January 12, 1955, New York's *Daily News* featured the photo of Claudia Jones, Betty Gannett, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. The caption read, "Smiling, three female second-string Communist leaders are ready for ride to jail."[18] Flynn was a prominent women's rights leader and became the chairwomen of the Communist Party in 1961. In

[17] Ibid., 33.

[18] *The Daily News,* January 12, 1955, 344.

1955, Flynn and Jones were sent to serve time in the Federal Reformatory for Women in Alderson, West Virginia. While in prison, Jones was separated from her White comrades, teaching Jones that segregation was still a part of the justice system, even behind the bars.[19] In the 1955 poem entitled "To Elizabeth Gurley Flynn," Jones writes about the way she is reminded of Flynn throughout her day by various objects. She references Flynn's characteristics and life of service, even though it brings her strife. In the last stanza, Jones expresses how much she will miss Flynn as a comrade. In solidarity, she writes:

> Of all the times I'll miss you most
> Is when I'm least aware
> Because you will intrude I know
> Upon my inner ear
> Beloved comrade—when from you I tear
> My mind, my heart, my thoughts, you'll hear![20]

As a political prisoner, Jones recognized early on that her political activism was a threat to colonial powers like America, as well as to her home of Trinidad which had refused her entrance. In her poem entitled "The Elms at Morn," Jones writes about being imprisoned and surrounded by things she was unable to escape. Prison had become a metaphor of her whole life. No matter where Jones was located throughout the African Diaspora, she was restricted and entangled by the outside forces of colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and sexism. She writes:

> Barbed wire fence surrounds me
> And the fog rolls slowly in
> The elms stand tall and stately

[19] Davies, *Claudia Jones*, 190.
[20] Ibid*.,* 188.

And the maples crowd them in

The mops are on the porch my dear
And Frances sits beside me
Lois smokes a cigarette
I am in an awful net.[21]

As a freedom fighter for women's rights and the working class, Claudia Jones wrote poetry in the tradition of "Prison Blues," adding to the growing body of resistance literature and studies of incarcerated poetic creativity.[22] Despite the fact that Jones never self-identified as a poet, her work is a reflection of her political identity as a Black Communist. She articulated a poetic language that defied the oppressive attempts by the state to silence her—even when she was imprisoned. Mirroring the work of other Black women writers such as Lorraine Hansberry and Rosa Guy, Jones represents the Black internationalist woman figure by contributing to the political struggle centered on the visions of freedom and liberation of African-descended people throughout the world.[23]

ASSATA SHAKUR

In May 1973 Assata Shakur, formally known as Joanne Chesimard, was riding with Zayd Shakur in a car driven by Sundiata Acoli on the New Jersey Turnpike. Trooper James Harper pulled the car over for traffic violations, and Trooper Werner Foerster responded as backup. When the troopers approached the car, they asked the driver, Sundiata Acoli, to step out for questioning. A shootout ensued; both Foerster and Black Panther member

[21] Ibid., 186.

[22] Davies, *Left of Karl Marx,* 125.
[23] Ibid., 125.

Zayd Shakur were killed, and Acoli, Assata Shakur, and James Harper were wounded. Both Acoli and Assata Shakur were arrested for the murder of Foerster. Due to her wounds from the shootout, Shakur was confined within the Middlesex hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and was then moved to the Roosevelt hospital in Edison following her arrest. At the trial, Harper testified that Shakur fired the first shot from the front seat of the vehicle and that Acoli fired the fatal shots at Foerster, who died from ammunition from his own weapon. Shakur consistently proclaimed her innocence in the whole ordeal, and her defense team provided medical evidence for her plea. Despite evidence to the contrary, in 1977 she was convicted and sentenced to life, and on a daily basis during her incarceration at Riker's Island and Clinton Correctional Facility for Women, she was tortured, harassed, and tormented by FBI agents. With the help of her comrades, Shakur escaped from the Clinton Correctional Facility for Women in New Jersey on November 2, 1979. After her escape, Shakur went underground and eventually fled to Cuba, where she was granted political asylum by the late Fidel Castro. In 2013, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) offered a $2 million reward for information regarding her whereabouts and/or leading to the apprehension of Shakur. Many prominent African American leaders, including Alice Walker and Angela Davis, were outraged by this announcement of an additional one million dollars onto the bounty for Shakur. The FBI classified her as a "domestic terrorist," and she was the first woman to be placed on the FBI most wanted list.[24]

[24] FBI Vault, Poster, "Joanne D. Chesimard: Act of Terrorism—Domestic Terrorism; Unlawful Flight to AvoidConfinement—Murder. "Most Wanted Terrorist," May 2, 2013, https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/wanted_terrorists/joanne-deborah-chesimard. poster.

As a member of the Black Liberation Army (1970-1981) and the Black Panther Party (1970), Shakur's life as an activist poses pertinent questions of how she was targeted by the FBI, imprisoned and escaped, and granted political asylum in Cuba. The writings of Shakur from letters, essays, and publications demonstrate the resistance literature that continued the Black Radical Tradition during the late twentieth century. The lives of both Claudia Jones and Shakur have been similar in their fights against imperialism, racism, sexism, and White supremacy in America. Shakur specifically questions the concept of freedom in America and in Cuba. Embodying the characteristics of Yaa Asantewaa, Harriet Tubman, and Queen Nanny, Assata Shakur represents a contemporary Black woman warrior and revolutionary who fought and survived colonial oppression. Furthermore, her life exhibits the evolution of a revolutionary, the solidarity and support she gained from other revolutionaries, and the connection between poetry and activism.

Prior to being incarcerated, Assata Shakur lived what outwardly seems to have been a typical life of a young woman in New York. During her first two weeks at Manhattan Community College, Shakur discovered the Golden Drum Society, the Black organization on campus.[25] She described having an awakening because of the dashikis, an African garment, and her exposure to African-centered conversations. This environment was an entirely new arena for Shakur, especially since, in an effort to make barely enough money to survive, she had recently been working as a restaurant server.

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[25] Barbara Casey, *Assata Shakur: A 20th Century Escaped Slave* (Rockhill, SC: Strategic Media Books, 2017), 24.

Having learned only about Harriet Tubman, George Washington Carver, and Booker T. Washington while she was growing up, it was history that inspired her the most while a college student. She learned about the struggle of Black people and the United States' systematic oppression of people of color for centuries. As a student, she also joined the Third World Coalition and became the student representative. During this time, she gained experience in protest by participating in demonstrations related to housing, welfare, the rights of construction workers, and antiwar movements. She came to understand the oppression that Black people in the U.S. and people in developing countries experienced, and her increasing awareness of such suffering was a significant factor that contributed greatly to Shakur's becoming a revolutionary.[26]

THE POETRY OF ASSATA SHAKUR

Born JoAnne Deborah Byron, then using for a time her married name of Joanne Chesimard, Assata Shakur shared her personal and political life story in the 1987 autobiography *Assata*. Similar to the life of Claudia Jones, Shakur began learning about the oppression of Black people in America, and globally, at a young age while living in New York. After she was a political prisoner, followed by her political asylum in Cuba, many artists, writers, and prominent figures have paid homage to Shakur because of her activist influence. While residing in Cuba, she wrote her autobiography in which she shares her side of the story about the criminal allegations that had been made against her in the United States. Shakur's poetry is featured throughout her book and floats

[26] Casey, 25.

throughout the chapters. Some of her poetry focuses on experiences she went through as a child, while the rest highlights her imprisonment and her time as a conscious adult. In the poem entitled "To My Momma," she pays tribute to her mother and the way she struggled in America. This material refers to the American dream and the goals she could not reach. Unfortunately, this same pattern of harsh experiences was also a reality for a very large number of Africana people living in America:

> To my momma,
> who has swallowed the amerikan dream
> and choked on it.
>
> To my momma,
> whose dreams have fought each other—
> and died.…
>
> To my momma, who couldn't turn
> hell into paradise
> and blamed herself.[27]

Shakur references the historical roots of African Americans all the way back to the anguish of those who were sold as slaves on the auction block. She highlights another harsh reality that prevented African people from achieving the American dream. The end of the poem expresses Shakur's pride in her mother for persevering and surviving her struggle in the world. Her mother is an example of the numerous Black women who sacrifice to provide a better future for their families. Here within this poem, as she does in so many of her other writings, Shakur acknowledges and testifies to the strength of "our people:":

> We have all been infected
> with a sickness

[27] Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 193-194**.**

that can be traced back
to the auction block.

You must not feel guilty
for what has been done to us.
Only the strong go crazy.
The weak just go along….

Momma, i am proud of you.
I look at you
and see the strength of our people.
I have seen you struggle
in the dark;
the world beating on your back,
dragging your catch
back to our den.[28]

One of the most popular and frequently cited stanzas by Shakur focuses on liberation. Written as a reflection on the Black Liberation Army, it resembles the ending of *The Communist Manifesto* that states, "Workers of the World, Unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains!"[29] The untitled excerpt is frequently quoted by revolutionary and Pan-African organizations because the poem highlights revolutionary figures who have been lost in the struggle. For instance, Fred Hampton was a political organizer in the Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party. In 1968, he attempted to merge the BPP and the gangs of the Chicago Southside. This effort of solidarity caused Hoover and the FBI to target his actions, which resulted in Hampton and several other BPP members being shot and killed during a FBI raid on December 4, 1968.[30] The short life of Hampton is just

[28] Ibid., 193-194.

[29] Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), 7.

[30] Jeffery Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2010), 30.

one example of the political influence of the Black Panther Party and the similar movements of the 1960s. The poem was frequently used as a chant during protest and marches because it expresses the need for oppressed people to fight for liberation:

> It is our duty to fight for our freedom.
> It is our duty to win.
> We must love each other and support each other.
> We have nothing to lose but our chains:
>
> In the spirit of:
>
> Ronald Carter
> William Christmas
> Mark Clark
> Mark Essex
> Frank "Heavy" Fields
> Woodie Changa Olugbala Green
> Fred Hampton
> Lil' Bobby Hutton
> George Jackson
> Johnathan Jackson
> James McClain
> Harold Russell
> Zayd Malik Shakur
> Anthony Kumu Olugbala White
>
> We must fight on.[31]

In her autobiography, Shakur apologizes to other Black brothers and sisters involved in the struggle by saying she should have never been on the New Jersey Turnpike in 1973. She discussed the deaths of Black freedom fighters and the way the "pigs" try to tarnish their names.[32] Every name that Shakur mentioned in this poem has

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[31] Shakur, 52-53.

[32] Ibid., 52-53.

a historical narrative of its own. Each name has its own story, its own history that documents the harsh conditions they endured, but also the fatal gunshot that led to their demise. Shakur's poetry reminds readers of the acts of White supremacy and the way police and the FBI treated Black freedom fighters. In the poem "For Rema Olugbala-Youngblood," she pays homage to a man named Rema Olugbala, who hanged himself during an attempt to break out of prison. In prefatory comments to this poem Shakur writes, "Another Black man had died trying to be free." This moment was an emotional time for the many other revolutionaries who were in prison or underground at that time, and who had thoughts about freedom and about the steps being taken to achieve it. Shakur was deeply affected by this incident, and took it very hard, but instead of reacting out of anger, she wrote another poem:

> For Rema Olugbala-Youngblood
> They think they killed you.
> But i saw you yesterday,
> standing with your hands in your pockets
> waiting for the real deal to go down.
> I saw you smiling your "fuck it" smile, blood in your eyes,
> your heart pumping freedom
> Youngblood![33]

This poem speaks to the youth. Tragically, well into the twenty-first century, Black people are still being shot and killed by the police. The protection of Black lives is an ongoing struggle in the United States. A number of the Black youth have lost their lives at the hands of police or trying to escape the injustices of the criminal system. Shakur speaks to them by saying that even though Rema is no longer alive, she nevertheless still

[33] Ibid., 163-164.

sees him in other spaces, such as in the playground and in the faces of other youth in the city. By this recognition, she means that there are other Black youth just like Rema all around. She reinforces Rema's legacy in greater depth when she repeats, "they think they killed you," metaphorically speaking of his spirit and the other Black boys who are much like him and embody the same spirit:

> They think they killed you.
> But i saw you yesterday
> in the playground.
> Black skin, sweaty, shiny,
> hurling your ball bomb into the hoop
> right on target.
> Won't be no game next time
> cause you ain't hardly playing.[34]

In the last stanza, Shakur refers to the youths as "Youngbloods" and asserts that they have no time to waste their blood on alcohol and drugs. She uses the terms "syringes" and "barroom floors" to make this point. She highlights the themes that were alive within the hearts and minds of the youth during this time:

> Youngbloods ain't got no blood to waste
> in no syringes, on no barroom floors,
> in no strange lands
> delaying other youngbloods' freedom.
> We don't need no tired blood.
> No anemic blood. No blood clots
> in our new body.[35]

In a lighter piece entitled, "Current Events," Shakur demonstrates her love for African things and African people. The poem compliments her love for natural beauty and

[34] Ibid., 164.
[35] Ibid., 164.

Black people while also mentioning that perhaps she is "out of fashion." The 1960s and 1970s represented a time of the positivity related to the natural Black state. The slogans "Black is Beautiful" and "I'm Black and I'm Proud" were used to empower individuals to embrace their Blackness in its natural form. Similar to the "Phenomenal Women" poem written by poet Maya Angelou in 1978, Shakur affirms her womanhood and her Blackness. She writes:

> It is true i have not
> Straightened back my hair.
> Nor rediscovered Maybelline.
> And it is also true that i still like African things,
> Like statues and dresses
> and PEOPLE [36]

"Affirmation" is a poem of hope. Printed in the beginning pages of the autobiography, it establishes the way Shakur views freedom in the world. It affirms that all things should have the right to grow and prosper into whatever form they are destined to be. This poem seeks to give an understanding of how life should be, and how we often miss out on the little things in the struggle for liberation. By adhering to the belief in better days to come, even while fighting White supremacy and injustices in the present, Shakur sees the sunshine and a brighter future. It is one of her lighter pieces of poetry, in which she is speaking positively of what is to come, and not what is:

> I believe in living.
> I believe in the spectrum
> of Beta days and Gamma people.
> I believe in sunshine.
> In windmills and waterfalls,
> tricycles and rocking chairs.
> And i believe that seeds grow into sprouts.

[36] Shakur, 1.

> And sprouts grow into trees.
> I believe in the magic of the hands.
> And in the wisdom of the eyes.

The end of the poem takes a turn as Shakur recalls her own personal experiences with law enforcement and police. As a woman who had experienced harsh treatment at the hands of the police during the New Jersey Turnpike incident, Shakur's established views of the police were changed. She began to see them in a new light during her time in the hospital and while on trial, but she realized that these incidents were not the end of the struggle for her. In response, she writes, "a wall is just a wall," acknowledging that her journey was not complete.

> I have been locked by the lawless.
> Handcuffed by the haters.
> Gagged by the greedy.
> And, if i know any thing at all,
> it's that a wall is just a wall
> and nothing more at all.
> It can be broken down.
>
> I believe in living.[37]

In the documentary entitled *Assata Shakur and William Morales Speak: Political Prisoners in the United States*, Shakur discusses the cases of her fellow comrades such as Geronimo, Sundiata Acoli, and Mumia Abu Jamal, most especially the fact that the government was trying to give Mumia the electric chair. In the interview footage from 1987, Shakur describes it as a case of a human being's life—a human being who had dedicated his life to the liberation of people. "If we allow the government to kill Mumia,

[37] Ibid., 1.

then what hope do we give the youth?"[38] In the spirit of solidarity, Shakur has continued the struggle even while living in Cuba. She continues to write about the injustices in America as a form of slavery. By describing herself as an escaped slave and a Maroon woman, she again places herself into the conversation of Africana warrior women. As a member of the Black Panther Party, Shakur recognized what kind of revolution she intended to practice. The Black Liberation Army provided her with the tools needed to practice the theories she had learned throughout her life of activism.

The mirroring lives of Claudia Jones and Assata Shakur furthers the conversation, scholarship, and research of Africana women and their contributions to the Black Radical Tradition. Jones represents Trinidad, America, and later London, and Shakur's Southern roots and her connections to New York and to Cuba offer a unique perspective on the conditions of Black people throughout the world. Their writings and activism help to paint the picture of the patriarchy, capitalism, and sexism that still flourishes in America. Because of the resistance literature they created and their roles as members of prominent Black movements, their history remains.

CONCLUSION

Appealing to Shakur's idea of the Black Radical Tradition, her poem "The Tradition" highlights the various ways African people have continued the struggle for liberation. She writes the poem as a chronological timeline, reflecting on events in Africa up until the

[38] "Assata Shakur and William Morales Speak: Political Prisoners in the United States," *Freedom Now*, December 7-10, 1990.

twentieth century. She demonstrates how the middle passage, newspapers, protests, and fighting are forms of survival that are traditions in our struggle for liberation.

> Carry on the tradition.
>
> There were Black People since the childhood of
> who carried it on.
> In Ghana and Mali and Timbuktu
> we carried it on.
>
> Carried on the tradition.
>
> We hid in the bush.
> When the slavemasters came
> holding spears.
> And when the moment was ripe,
> leaped out and lanced the lifeblood
> of would-be masters.[39]

In one stanza, she references the slave ship revolts and the many enslaved Africans who chose to jump into the ocean rather than be enslaved. Shakur uses this unique moment to show the various ways Black people have resisted oppression. Even on the plantation, they fought back in ways like those in the story of Nat Turner in Virginia. Bringing together many diverse parts of the African Diaspora struggle, the poem situates the geographic scope of the resistance: "In Selma and San Juan. Mozambique. Mississippi. In Brazil and in Boston." She places an emphasis on carrying on the tradition. Shakur makes it clear through this poem to highlight key historical moments for African people everywhere, that wherever African people are, the tradition will be carried on:

> On slave ships,
> hurling ourselves into oceans.
> Slitting the throats of our captors.
> We took their whips.

[39] Shakur, 263.

And their ships.
Blood flowed in the Atlantic—
and it wasn't all ours.

We carried it on.

Fed Missy arsenic apple pies.
Stole the axes from the shed.
Went and chopped off master's head.

We ran. We fought.
We organized a railroad.
An underground.

We carried it on….

In Selma and San Juan.
Mozambique. Mississippi.
In Brazil and in Boston,
We carried it on.
Through the lies and the sell-outs,
The mistakes and the madness.
Through pain and hunger and frustration,
We carried it on….

TO FREEDOM![40]

The poetry of Jones and Shakur is a reminder of the Black Radical Tradition and the unique ways activists carry it on. Each poem contains its own historical framework and refers to an event or emotion that Africana people remember and can connect to. Poetry is ultimately a source that can be used to remember times of oppression as well as the times of empowerment. In other words, a poet can also be a historian. A poet can examine the same archive or experience the same event and write about it from their own perspective.

[40] Ibid., 263-264.

It remains unknown whether Shakur wrote any of her poems while incarcerated. Since she was held in solitary confinement during most of her prison sentence, it seems unlikely she would have been given frequent access to pen and paper the way that Jones often was during her incarceration. Being branded as a revolutionary takes away even the few freedoms that most other prisoners have, and solitary confinement separates them from the other prisoners. Following the tradition of women writers such as Mari Evans and Sonia Sanchez, Jones and Shakur fit well into the discourse of radical Black women writers. The literature of Africana women writers is vital to the preservation of historical narratives of African resistance in the world. In addition, reading the literature created by the oppressed offers a different perspective than does the research that already exists. As political prisoners, Claudia Jones and Assata Shakur are some of the few people who were able to fully tell their stories to those outside the prison bars. Unfortunately, many of their comrades such as Mumia Abu Jamal and Sundiata Acoli, because of their sacrifices, may never gain freedom.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did the Communist Party appeal to Claudia Jones?
2. In what ways does Assata Shakur's experience with the criminal justice system influence changes in the Black Freedom movement?
3. How are the ideologies of Marxism, Black Nationalism, and Black Internationalism evidenced discussed in this section? Do the ideologies appear to be in conflict? Why or why not?

Writing Prompt:

Choose one of the poems by Jones or Shakur and explain how its message is relevant to the circumstances that people of African descent have confronted throughout history.

Chapter 18

Critical Issues in African American Health

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INTRODUCTION

A deep connection between the field of medicine and the overall treatment and perception of African American extends back to the founding of this country. Proponents used pseudo-scientific ideas about the "natural" inferiority of Blacks to justify racism and slavery. In turn, these same forces led to a health inequality—with poor care from the medical field and higher rates of serious health issues—that persist in the present. African Americans have also faced lasting barriers in gaining employment and professional recognition in the healthcare field.

From the origins and continuation of health inequality to the fight to gain access to professional medical treatment, African American health and healthcare in U.S. history are interrelated issues. African American physicians, dentists, and nurses along with Black medical schools and hospitals have done pioneering work. While traditionally receiving less attention than issues like voting, housing, and education, the African American fight for healthcare is an important component of the Black freedom struggle, and a key aspect for understanding the current state of Black Americans.

BLACK HEALTH IN EARLY U.S. HISTORY

African American health is inextricably linked to slavery. Physician and scholar Rodney G. Hood argues that health disparity can be traced back to the period of slavery and the origins of racism, an effect he calls the "slave health deficit." The enslavement of millions of African Americans had severe and lasting health impacts, both during the period of

slavery and after.[1] The initial period of enslavement may have been the most lethal. Historians estimate that as many as 50% of Africans died before leaving the continent, during capture, the forced march to slave holding areas, or waiting in pens.[2] Somewhere between 15-20% died during the Middle Passage across the Atlantic from the fifteenth through the nineteenth century.[3] The mortality rate varied by place of origin, conditions in captivity and on the ship, and the point of destination. As many as 675,000 died during capture, captivity, or transportation to this country.[4] Of the 450,000 Africans who made it to the U.S., an additional 4.3% died in the period between arrival and sale, and as many as 25% perished during the "acclimation period" of their first eighteen months as they adjusted to new locations, climates, and diseases.[5]

Enslaved individuals suffered from significant health problems. The Black infant and childhood mortality rate was double the rate for Whites. Over half of all Black children were born severely underweight due to the poor treatment and lack of nutrition for pregnant slaves; many women miscarried or gave birth to stillborn babies. On average, Black mothers could nurse for only four months, compared to eight months for White babies. Early weaning, horrid living conditions, and lack of nutrition led to more than 50% of Black infants dying before the age of one.[6]

Poor health continued into adulthood. A low-quality supply of food resulted in "protein hunger" and deficiencies in thiamine, niacin, calcium, Vitamin D, and

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[1] Rodney G. Hood, "The 'Slave Health Deficit': The Case for Reparations to Bring Health Parity to African Americans," *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 93:1 (January 2001), 1-5.

[2] William M. Byrd and Linda A. Clayton, "An American Heath Dilemma: A History of Blacks in the Health System," *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 84 (1992), 189-200.

[3] Byrd and Clayton, "An American Health Dilemma."

[4] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "How Many Slaves Landed in the U.S.," *The Root*, January 6, 2014.

[5] Herbert S. Klein, Stanley L. Engerman, Robin Haines, and Ralph Shlomowitz, "Transoceanic Mortality: The Slave Trade in Comparative Perspective," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 58:1 (January 2001), 93-118, 13; Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 178.

[6] Steven Mintz, "Childhood and Transatlantic Slavery," in *Children and Youth in History*, Item #57, http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/items/show/57, accessed January 1, 2018.

magnesium.[7] The cramped and poorly constructed slave cabins, contaminated water sources, and harsh working conditions exacerbated malnutrition, leading to higher susceptibility to disease and developmental problems. Many enslaved people suffered from rickets, bowed legs, dysentery, respiratory ailments, cholera, typhoid, worms, skin problems, dementia, blindness, seizures, and swollen abdomens.[8] The lack of record-keeping at many plantations makes it difficult to know exact numbers, but scholars estimate the average life expectancy for an enslaved individual came to only 21-22 years, compared to 40-43 years for White during the antebellum period.[9] Mortality rates varied by location and by the type of plantation: enslaved people died at higher rates on sugar and rice plantations than on cotton-growing plantations.[10]

The field of medicine both justified the poor treatment of African Americans and contributed to their health problems. Building on the writings of White intellectuals going back to at least the Greeks, leading American scientists and physicians categorized African Americans as biologically inferior and less intelligent, or even sub-human. By the early 1800s, proponents of slavery used this pseudo-scientific argument to justify slavery. Defenders of slavery further argued that Africans were more genetically predisposed to work in the fields than Whites. Thomas Jefferson advocated this position in his influential *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1805). While he concluded that enslaved Africans were "inferior to the Whites in the endowments both of body and mind," he argued that they possessed some qualities that made them genetically designed to labor, notably that they "seem to require less sleep" and were "more tolerant of heat." Physicians perpetuated the belief that Africans also had resistance or immunity to diseases like yellow fever.

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[7] Herbert C. Covey,*African American Slave Medicine: Herbal and Non-Herbal Treatments*
(Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

[8] Robert William Fogel,*Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (NY: W.W. Norton, 1989), 137.

[9] "What was Life Like Under Slavery," Digital History, 2016, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3040, accessed July 11, 2009.

[10] Covey, African American Slave Medicine , 8

Because of these views, African Americans did not receive proper healthcare. Slave-owners primarily cared about profit; this, not benevolence, served as their main motivation to seek medical care for enslaved individuals. Owners wanted slaves to recover quickly to return them to labor. On plantations, few slave-owners employed physicians. Instead, the master, his wife, an overseer, or even designated slaves provided care prescribed in home health guides.[11] Owners also focused on using medical knowledge to increase the birth rate among the enslaved population. Buyers placed great emphasis on the perceived fertility of females, in the hopes that these women would give birth to children that would be considered the slave owner's property.[12] Slave-owners usually called for a physician only as a last resort, and racist attitudes affected the care offered by White physicians. White doctors experimented on enslaved individuals in pursuit of medical advances due to their beliefs that Blacks were inferior and had higher tolerances of pain. These doctors sought no consent from the enslaved but instead from the slave owner. Physicians applied this gained knowledge to benefit the White community.[13]

The inequality in access to healthcare and the poor treatment by physicians in this period marked the beginning of a healthcare system based on racial discrimination. The view of African Americans as inferior and "less worthy" meant that few received proper medical care for curable afflictions. In some ways, free Blacks faced worse healthcare, with little access due to high rates of poverty and physicians who refused to treat Black patients. A two-tiered healthcare system—with greater access and treatment for Whites—persisted for much of American history. Due to this neglect, enslaved individuals provided care for themselves. They used folk medicine they had learned in Africa before slavery—including Cesarean birthing and inoculation for smallpox—or from other enslaved members, passed down orally. Black women predominantly served in this role and functioned as midwives for fellow slaves and even White women. For many African

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[11] Covey, *African American Slave Medicine*, 36.
[12] William Byrd and Linda A. Clayton, "Race, Medicine, and Healthcare in the United States: A Historical Survey," *Journal of the Medical Association*, 93:3 (March 2001), 11s-34s.
[13] Ibid.

Americans, medical treatment included plant-based and herbal remedies as well as spiritual elements like prayers, charms, songs, and conjuring, vestiges of African healing traditions. Even when White physicians were available, many preferred to use folk healers who offered more holistic and personalized care. Some herbal remedies worked, and even those that did not presented less potentially negative side effects than popular official remedies like bleeding or mercury. Although many Whites opposed Black medical practitioners—for example, South Carolina and Virginia passed laws in the mid-eighteenth century to prohibit the practice—some Southern plantation owners relied on Blacks to provide medical care.[14]

African Americans also used medical knowledge as a form of resistance. Some enslaved individuals feigned illness to purposely slow down work, get needed rest, or spend time with family. Unfortunately, slave owners often suspected slaves of making up illnesses even when truly sick, forcing the sick to work and punishing those they thought to be making up an ailment.[15] In response to slave-owners' treatment of female slaves as "breeders" producing more enslaved individuals to work in the fields, some enslaved women used early forms of birth control or even abortion to prevent this and regain some form of control over their bodies.[16]

BLACK PHYSICIANS IN THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD

Some African Americans, both slave and free, learned medicine under an apprenticeship. For example, James Durham was born in Philadelphia in 1762. Serving as a physician's assistant to a series of owners, Durham bought his freedom in 1783. Durham established his own practice in New Orleans, treating White and Black patients. In 1788, Durham briefly returned to Philadelphia, where he befriended Dr. Benjamin Rush, a leading

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[14] Covey, *African American Slave Medicine*, 43.
[15] Covey, *African American Slave Medicine*, 38.
[16] Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

physician, Founding Father, and opponent of slavery. In speeches and letters in support of abolition, Rush held up Durham as an example of the intelligence and capability of Blacks. Durham moved back to New Orleans in 1789, where he continued to practice medicine until at least 1802. However, Spanish rules permitted him to treat only throat ailments after 1801 due to his lack of a formal medical degree. Durham is believed to be the first Black physician in the United States.[17]

Some free Blacks went to medical school in Europe or at a small number of Northern colleges. Born in New York City in 1813, James McCune Smith became the first African American to earn a formal medical degree. The son of a woman who bought her freedom, Smith attended the city's school for free Blacks. Denied admission to American colleges, Smith finished the University of Glasgow in 1837. After an internship in Paris, he returned to New York City, set up his own practice, and became a leading African American intellectual and abolitionist. Smith helped found the National Council of the Colored People with Frederick Douglass and wrote the introduction to Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Smith also became the first African American published in a medical journal, and refuted ideas of racial differences.[18]

A handful of others attended medical college in the United States. Born in Baltimore in 1815, Samuel Ford McGill moved with his family to Liberia in 1826. He returned to the United States to attend medical school at Dartmouth College and graduated in 1839. McGill practiced in Liberia and trained other physicians in the country.[19] David J. Peck became the first African American to receive a medical degree from an American medical school—Chicago's Rush Medical College in 1847; he was also the first to practice in the United States—initially in Philadelphia, and then Pittsburgh,

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[17] Charles E. Wynes, "Dr. James Durham, Mysterious Eighteenth-Century Black Physician: Man or Myth," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 103:3 (July 1979), 325-333.
[18] Thomas M. Morgan, "The Education and Medical Practice of Dr. James McCune Smith (1813-1865), First Black American to Hold a Medical Degree," *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 95:7 (July 2003), 603-614.
[19] James L. Sims, George L. Seymour; and Benjamin J.K. Anderson, *African-American Exploration in West Africa: Four Nineteenth-Century Diaries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 370.

before moving to Nicaragua in 1852. Like Durham, abolitionists held up Peck as an example of the equal intellect of African Americans.[20] After first working as a nurse for eight years, Rebecca Lee Crumpler became the first African American woman to complete a doctorate in medicine in 1864. Crumpler worked in Richmond, Virginia—providing care for recently freed individuals through the Freedmen's Bureau—and ran a practice in Boston, Massachusetts.[21]

Few African Americans had formal opportunities to receive medical training. Only a handful of medical colleges admitted Black students, and those who did graduate faced obstacles in practicing. Few physicians referred patients to Peck's practice or recognized him as a doctor, for example, leading him to close after only two years. Most White patients refused to utilize a Black doctor. Despite these barriers, Black physicians served as intellectual and civic leaders in the Black community and played prominent roles in the abolition movements.

THE CIVIL WAR

African Americans played a significant role in the Civil War, including in healthcare. With many White physicians serving in the Confederate Army, plantation owners increasingly relied on enslaved folk medical practitioners for care. The South also used enslaved African Americans to treat wounded Confederate soldiers.[22] Hundreds of thousands of African Americans fled during the war, leading to a major health crisis. The U.S. Army created refugee camps as it traveled. Housing was quickly constructed and of poor quality, as were food sources and sanitation. Thousands died of disease—smallpox, in

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[20] Michael J. Harris, "David Jones Peck, MD: A Dream Denied," *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 88:9 (1996), 600-604.

[21] National Library of Medicine, "Dr. Rebecca Lee Crumpler Biography," National Institute of Health, 2013, https://cfmedicine.nlm.nih.gov/physicians/biography_73.html, last accessed July 11, 2019.

[22] Covey, *African American Slave Medicine*, 46.

particular—and hunger. Despite the harsh conditions, over 400,000 Black refugees lived in refugee camps in Corinth, Mississippi; Memphis, Tennessee; New Bern, North Carolina; and elsewhere. They provided invaluable services for the army as soldiers, teamsters, nurses, and seamstresses, and created new lives in freedom.[23]

In Washington, D.C., the Union Army built the "Contraband Hospital" as part of a refugee camp on the outskirts of the city. Like other camps, overcrowding, poor living conditions (most lived in tents even during the winter), and limited food and water (only one well supplied the entire camp) caused many to become sick. The hospital provided care for camp inhabitants. At first, the hospital's staff was primarily White, but in May 1863, Alexander T. August—an African American—became the surgeon-in-charge. After August's appointment, Black doctors increasingly staffed the hospital, working with Black nurses mostly drawn from the camp's residents. The government closed the camp in December 1863, but continued the hospital, moving it several times, before eventually becoming the Freedmen's Hospital with a permanent home on Howard University's campus in 1868. In all its various locations, Black nurses and doctors trained at the hospital, and then went to work at other hospitals or their own practices.[24]

The Freedmen's Bureau set up hospitals like the one in D.C. in other states, with a peak of 45 in 1867. These hospitals provided care for tens of thousands, many of whom had never before received professional medical treatment. However, these institutions suffered from a lack of funding, low salaries that made hiring difficult, and poor building conditions. When the Freedmen's Bureau ended in 1872, only the Freedmen's Hospital in D.C. remained open.[25]

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[23] Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 95.

[24] Jill L. Newmark, "Contraband Hospital, 1862-1863: Health Care for the First Freedpeople," BlackPast.org, 2017, http://www.Blackpast.org/perspectives/contraband-hospital-1862-1863-heath-care-first-freedpeople, last accessed July 11, 2019.

[25] Vanessa Northington Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves: The Black Hospital Movement, 1920-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 6.

Black Health and Healthcare After the Civil War

Poor health continued to afflict African Americans in the war's aftermath. At least one million suffered or died from diseases like smallpox.[26] Due to high rates of poverty, many could not afford proper medical care, and those who could, experienced discrimination from predominantly White physicians. This poor treatment, plus the history and continued experimentation on Black bodies by White doctors, resulted in a lasting distrust of the medical field. As a result, many Black Americans still relied on Black folk practitioners and midwives.[27] Health problems had other significant effects that affected future generations. On top of other issues like racial discrimination, health problems made it difficult to acquire land and wealth, and prevented mobility. Even after the war, many African Americans remained stuck in the South; over 90% of African Americans still lived in the South at the end of the nineteenth century.[28]

After the Civil War, African Americans made some gains in the medical field. The son of former slaves, Robert Tanner Freeman became the first African American to graduate with a doctorate in dental surgery. Freeman apprenticed under a White dentist, and after an initial rejection from Harvard, which refused to admit Black students, he and another student—George Franklin Grant—were admitted to Harvard Dental School in 1867. Freeman graduated in 1869 and set up a practice in his home city of Washington, D.C.[29] Freeman's classmate, Grant, became Harvard's first Black faculty member. Grant was a pioneer in the care of patients with congenital cleft palates, patenting a device that allowed patients to speak better.[30] Ida Gray Nelson Rollins became the first female African

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[26] Downs, *Sick from Freedom*.

[27] Byrd and Clayton, "Race, Medicine, and Healthcare in the United States," 319.

[28] T.D. Logan, "Health, Human Capital, and African American Migration Before 1910," *Explorations in Economic History*, 46:2 (2009), 169–185.

[29] Winston Benjamin, "Robert Tanner Freeman," BlackPast.org, 2017, http://www.Blackpast.org/aah/freeman-robert-tanner-1846-1873, last accessed July 11, 2019.

[30] Chris Ott, "George Franklin Grant," BlackPast.org, 2017, http://www.Blackpast.org/aah/grant-george-franklin-1847-1910, last accessed July 11, 2019.

American doctor of dentistry, graduating from the Ohio College of Dentistry in 1890 and practicing in Cincinnati and Chicago.[31]

However, most medical schools still refused to admit Black students. As a result, several Black medical colleges originated, starting with Howard University's medical department in 1868. Most of these schools were affiliated with missionary organizations like the American Missionary Association, received little funding, and employed few staff.[32] By the 1890s, over nine hundred Black physicians held medical degrees and practiced in the United States, serving a population of 7.5 million African Americans.[33] Graduates of these programs still faced major obstacles in gaining professional experiences and acceptance. Founded in 1847, the American Medical Association was the most prestigious organization in the medical profession. Local chapters determined membership, and almost all refused to admit Black physicians. This resulted in the denial of post-graduate lectures and trainings. In response, a Black equivalent of the AMA—the National Medical Association—formed in 1895. Similarly, in 1908 the National Association of Colored Nurses started. Additionally, most White hospitals refused to hire Black doctors. Almost all required AMA membership for employment, effectively barring African Americans. In the late nineteenth century, many Southern states formally segregated public hospitals, and private hospitals voluntarily followed suit. Hospitals refused to hire Black physicians and treated Black patients only in separate wings or different buildings.

Facing discrimination from White hospitals as both patients and physicians, African Americans began their own hospitals. In 1891, a group of Black physicians founded the Provident Hospital and Training School Association in Chicago, the first Black-operated

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[31] Phylisha W. Agbor, "Ida Gray Nelson Rollins," BlackPast.org, 2017, http://www.Blackpast.org/aah/rollins-ida-gray-nelson-1867-1953, last accessed July 11, 2019.

[32] Todd L. Savitt, "Abraham Flexner and the Black Medical Schools," in B. Baransky and N. Gevitz, eds., *Beyond Flexner: Medical Education in the 20th Century* (NY: Greenwood Press, 1992), 5-218.

[33] Herbert G. Ruffin, "Daniel Hale Williams," BlackPast.org, 2017, http://www.Blackpast.org/aah/williams-daniel-hale-1856-1931, last accessed July 11, 2019.

hospital in the nation. Provident also held several other distinctions: it had the first interracial staff, offered the first training space for Black nurses, and was the site of one of the earliest open-heart surgeries in 1893. Black hospitals throughout the country—primarily in the North—followed; by 1919, one hundred and eighteen Black hospitals existed. During that same period, the number of Black nurses grew significantly as well, greatly aiding the proliferation of Black hospitals. Spelman College opened the first Black nursing school in 1881.[34]

Numerous problems hampered Black hospitals though. Due to high Black poverty rates, hospitals collected little money in patient fees, and Black hospitals usually did not receive funding from state or local governments. The lack of government aid forced these institutions to rely on donations and fundraising campaigns and to endure continuous money shortages. Financial problems made expansion extremely difficult, limiting the number of patients who could be served and preventing improvements in medical equipment and building facilities. This latter condition led to constant issues with licensing inspections. Black hospitals also faced staffing problems. Very few White medical schools admitted African Americans, and only seven Black medical colleges existed by 1910. Like hospitals, these schools faced funding problems. In 1904, the American Medical Association created the Council on Medical Education (CME) to study and standardize medical education. The CME asked the Carnegie Foundation to fund a study, led by Abraham Flexner, of all medical colleges in the United States. Of the seven Black medical schools in existence at the time of the Flexner Report (1910), the five colleges named in the report as "inadequate" all closed in the following thirteen years. Only Howard University and Meharry College maintained their medical schools, and another Black medical college did not open until the Charles Drew Medical School in Los Angeles started in 1966. During that fifty-six-year period, the number of Black physicians, which had increased steadily in the prior fifty-year period, declined.[35]

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[34] Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves*, 3.
[35] Savitt, "Abraham Flexner and the Black Medical School," 1420.

The dearth of Black physicians made staffing hospitals difficult, especially in the South. Oppressed by segregation, many Black doctors left the South as part of the Great Migration. Some African American leaders also openly criticized Black hospitals, arguing that their existence helped to support segregation; proponents of segregation could point to Black hospitals as justification for not integrating public hospitals. Defenders of Black hospitals highlighted the great need for the institutions and the biracial staffs as examples of cross-racial cooperation; hospitals like Provident and Flint Goodridge in New Orleans had White patients in the 1890s and early 1900s, although this largely ceased as segregation increased and the color line hardened.[36]

Even though many faced great professional discrimination, Black doctors served as leading medical pioneers in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1897, Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller graduated from the Boston University School of Medicine and became the nation's first Black psychiatrist. He worked at the Westborough State Hospital in Boston and served as a faculty member at his alma mater. After working with Dr. Alois Alzheimer at the Royal Psychiatric Hospital in Munich, in 1912 Fuller published the first major study of Alzheimer's disease in the U.S.[37] Others too made major contributions: Dr. Louis T. Wright developed the intradermal injection for smallpox vaccination in 1917; Dr. William August Hinton created the Hinton Test for the diagnosis of syphilis in 1936 and published the first medical textbook authored by an African American in 1938; and Dr. Charles Drew developed new techniques for the storage and transportation of blood and plasma during World War II.[38]

The Black medical profession made significant advances in the first half of the twentieth century. The National Medical Association created the National Hospital

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[36] Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves*, 17.

[37] Camelie Heung, "Solomon Carter Fuller," BlackPast.org, 2017, http://www.Blackpast.org/aah/fuller-solomon-carter-1872-1953, last accessed July 11, 2019.

[38] "Black History Month: A Medical Perspective: Chronology of Achievements," Duke University Medical Center Library & Archives, 2016, http://guides.mclibrary.duke.edu/Blackhistorymonth/chronology, last accessed July 11, 2019.

Association in 1923 as part of its efforts to increase professionalization and standards and to prevent Black hospitals from closing. The NMA improved training, held conferences, wrote recommendations on hospital administration, and published articles on Black medical advances in their journal.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Black hospitals and healthcare workers also tackled the major public health issues of the time. Tuberculosis (Whites had a disease rate of 85.7 per 100,000, compared to the Black disease rate of 202 per 100,000), pneumonia (White rate of 97.1 per 100,000, compared to the Black rate of 145.9 per 100,000), and heart disease (White rate of 93.1 per 100,000, compared to Black rate of 126.4 per 100,000) contributed to a mortality rate twice as high, and a 62% higher infant mortality rate for Blacks as for Whites in the 1920s. The continued disparity in healthcare access greatly contributed to this inequality: one hospital bed existed for every 139 White Americans, compared to one bed for every 1,941 Black Americas.[39]

African American leaders played prominent roles in highlighting these issues and pushed forward efforts to address Black public health problems. In 1906, W.E.B. DuBois published *The Health and Physique of the Negro American* to counter the claims of White supremacists like Frederick Hoffman that the higher African American mortality rate was evidence of their natural inferiority. Hoffman—who worked at the Prudential Life Insurance Company—wrote *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* in 1896, in which he stipulated that African Americans were healthier during enslavement and would soon die out as a race. In his rebuttal, DuBois argued that the high death rate caused by diseases like tuberculosis resulted from African Americans' higher rates of poverty, not from racial inferiority. "All the evidence," DuBois noted, "goes to show that it is not a racial disease but a social disease." He used as evidence demographic data

[39] Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves*, 183.

collected by the United States Census Bureau. DuBois further advocated that increasing the number of Black hospitals, physicians, and healthcare workers, and improved sanitation, education, insurance, and economic opportunities would lower the mortality rate. Finally, DuBois called for the creation of local health care leagues to take the lead in combating Black public health issues.[40]

Head of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and perhaps the most influential Black American at the time, Booker T. Washington also addressed public health. Washington's Tuskegee Institute held a week-long event each year at the school and in the surrounding community that focused on sanitation and public health. Washington urged residents to thoroughly clean and whitewash their homes and to make improvements to promote better health. The school also sponsored public health talks. Starting in 1912, the Tuskegee Institute hosted a clinic during the health week, with physicians from throughout the country offering free medical treatment.[41] Speaking in 1914, Washington argued that 45% of Black deaths were "preventable" and African American serious illnesses cost the economy 100 million dollars annually. Washington called for a National Negro Health Week in 1915. An oversight committee at the Tuskegee Institute made recommendations each year on what local committees should do and called for churches, schools, fraternal organizations, and other community groups to participate. The week focused on home sanitation; education about tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections, especially syphilis; school health programs; free clinics; and neighborhood cleanups. The U.S. Public Health Service—which later controversially conducted the exploitative, forty-year syphilis study on Black men in Tuskegee, detailed later in this essay—became a co-sponsor in the 1920s. The weekly event turned into year-round

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[40] Robert A. Wortham, "W.E.B. DuBois and Demography: Early Explorations," *Sociation Today*, 7:1 (Spring 2009), http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v71/phila.htm, last accessed July 11, 2019.

[41] "National Negro Health Week," *Journal of the National Negro Health Association*, 39:2 (March 1947), 78-79.

activities and educational material known as the National Negro Health Movement, a program that existed until 1951.[42]

Recognizing that many African Americans could not afford medical treatment, some Black hospitals offered low-cost or free clinics for the indigent, and began providing their own insurance program for the working-class. Flint Goodridge Hospital in New Orleans was among the earliest, starting in 1936. For $3.65 dollars a year, patients were eligible for up to 21 days of hospitalization; they could also add their spouse for a total of $6.00 per couple, or all the children for a total of $8.50 per family. By 1938, over three thousand people enrolled. The American Medical Association endorsed the plan, and identified it as the cheapest in the nation, and *Life Magazine* hailed it as "heartening" inspiration during the Great Depression and Jim Crow.[43]

While free clinics, insurance programs, and public health initiatives led to improvements, African Americans still suffered higher rates of disease and death. The Great Depression further exacerbated these health problems, disproportionately affecting African Americans. It led to an increase in the Black poverty rate and a related decline in the number and financial stability of Black hospitals. The National Medical Association argued that a "Black medical ghetto" existed in the U.S., with African American residents not receiving enough medical care and an insufficient number of Black hospitals to serve the large population.[44] Some African American leaders sought federal health funding. They argued that even those that upheld Jim Crow should support this effort as improved Black health would be good for the nation's economy. While pushing for federal aid, Black advocates often had to accept segregation rather than fight for integration in order to make some gains.

In 1943, the American Hospital Association (AHA) recommended that the federal government pass legislation to aid building of more hospitals. After lobbying by the AHA

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[42] Sandra Crouse Quinn and Stephen B. Thomas, "The National Negro Health Week, 1915 to 1951: A Descriptive Account," *Minority Health Today*, 2:3 (March/April 2001), 44-49.
[43] Claire Perry and George Sessions Perry, "Penny a Day Hospital," *The Saturday Evening Post* September 2, 1939.
[44] Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves*, 183.

and a speech by President Truman calling for improved healthcare, Congress passed the Hospital Survey and Construction Act (known as the Hill Burton Act) in 1946. The legislation made available federal funding for the expansion of existing hospitals and the construction of new ones, with the goal that each state would reach a quota of 4.5 beds available per 1,000 residents. Although a federal law, each state determined the allocation of funding. Furthermore, while the bill forbade racial discrimination, it permitted spending to support segregated facilities, as part of the "separate but equal" doctrine, until the Supreme Court struck down that provision in 1963.[45]

Most of the Hill Burton funding went to the South, as it was the region with the country's greatest need. Although White hospitals received most of the support, some aid facilitated the building of new Black hospitals or improvements on existing ones. Other federally funded programs helped cities and states create new health departments and maternal and child clinics. While these federal programs provided much-needed aid, critics argued that like Black hospitals, segregated health programs continued to uphold Jim Crow and health inequality.[46]

MEDICAL EXPLOITATION

Despite gains due to legislation, many African Americans remained distrustful of the government's involvement in healthcare. In the early twentieth century, the government funded forced sterilization programs in 32 states for tens of thousands of women, primarily people of color. Originating in the late nineteenth century, the eugenics movement spread in the U.S. starting in the 1900s. Eugenics was based on the concept that selective breeding should be encouraged, with government involvement, to improve society. Supported by funding from leading organizations like the Carnegie and

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[45] Carla J. Smith, "The Hill-Burton Act: A Basis for the Prevention of Urban Hospital Relocation," *Indiana Law School*, 55:4 (Summer 1980), 695-715.
[46] Karen Kruse Thomas, *Deluxe Jim Crow: Civil Rights and American Health Policy, 1935-1954*

Rockefeller foundations, scientists from top universities carried out pseudo-scientific research that demonstrated supposed negative genetic traits of certain groups that should not be allowed to reproduce: the mentally ill or disabled, those deemed sexually deviant, criminals, immigrants, the indigent, and minorities. Some doctors actively engaged in eugenicide, killing patients or willfully neglecting them—often newborns—until they died.[47]

Forced sterilization became the most mainstream manifestation of eugenics, with states adopting forced sterilization laws in the first decade of the twentieth century. Although masked as progressive reform (to produce the most superior citizens and to reduce government spending on providing for the "unworthy") and supported by public health advocates, scientists, physicians, and politicians, forced sterilization was a product of racism and xenophobia. In many ways, proponents promoted forced sterilization similar to the ways they advocated residential segregation (i.e., African Americans should be kept out of White neighborhoods to prevent the spread of disease) or anti-miscegenation (i.e., interracial marriage and children would produce "inferior," mixed race children, damaging to White purity). The Nazis partially modeled their own policies of sterilization and eugenicide in the 1930s and 1940s on American practices.[48]

Eighteen Southern states adopted sterilization laws and often used them to target African American women. In 1964, Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party leader Fannie Lou Hamer spoke of her own experience. In 1961, Hamer underwent surgery in Mississippi for a uterine tumor. During surgery, and without her consent, the operating physician performed an unnecessary hysterectomy. Hamer highlighted the commonality of the procedure, which she dubbed a "Mississippi appendectomy," and estimated that

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[47] Lisa Ko, "Unwanted Sterilization and Eugenics Programs in the United States," *Independent Lens*, January 29, 2016.

[48] Edwin Black, "The Horrifying American Roots of Nazi Eugenics," *History News Network*, September 2003, http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/1796, last accessed July 11, 2019.

physicians at the hospital, without consent and with no medical need, sterilized approximately 60% of Black female patients.[49]

HEALTHCARE AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Starting in the 1940s, the Black National Medical Association began to support the efforts of the NAACP and others to push for the integration of hospitals. Black civic leaders first targeted the Veterans Administration hospitals in 1945, finally succeeding in integration of these federally funded hospitals in 1953. Like other areas of civil rights, the push for medical equality proved extremely difficult.[50]

Most hospital nationwide remained segregated through the 1960s; one 1956 study found segregation in 83% of hospitals in the North and 94% of hospitals in the South. While the Civil Rights Movement most prominently focused on the desegregation of schools and voting rights, activists also fought for health equality. Community health workers established their clinics in places like Mississippi where none existed for African Americans. Medical students pushed schools to serve nearby Black residents. Lawyers sued hospitals that violated the discrimination provision of the Hill Burton Act. Black physicians played prominent roles in the NAACP and other civil rights groups. For example, T.R.M. Howard, a surgeon and president of the National Medical Association, founded the Regional Council of Negro Leadership in 1951, a Mississippi-based civil rights organization, and rose to national fame for his involvement in the case of Emmett Till, murdered in 1955. Physicians John Holloman Jr. and Walter Lee started the Medical Committee for Civil Rights in 1963. The group picketed the annual American Medical Association convention that year in protest over the organization's continued acceptance of discrimination by local chapters (it would not formally bar racial exclusion until 1968);

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[49] "Fannie Lou Hamer," WGBH Educational Foundation, 2018, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/freedomsummer-hamer/, last accessed July 11, 2019.

[50] Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves*, 183.

marched in the 1963 March on Washington; and provided care during the Mississippi Freedom Summer.[51]

After years of advocacy and litigation, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI of the bill mandated ineligibility for receiving any federal funds for any institution that discriminated against minorities. Congress followed up Title VI with the passage of the Social Security Amendments of 1965, which included Medicare—primarily health insurance for those 65 and older—Medicaid—insurance for those with low incomes.

Compliance by hospitals proved difficult as many resisted desegregation. Especially in the South, many hospitals either continued to employ only White doctors or hired a token number of Black physicians to avoid lawsuits. The NAACP made numerous complaints against hospitals for continuing to use segregated wards, water fountains, benches, and even telephones. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare found in the 1970s that hospitals containing 58% of the nation's beds ignored the statute, and the department launched a large-scale campaign, supplemented by numerous lawsuits by civil rights groups, to force hospitals to integrate and end discrimination. However, although federal laws mandated that hospitals that violated the discrimination statutes should be denied federal funding, few hospitals received any significant punishment for offenses. Lawsuits against hospitals for discrimination against Black patients and in hiring Black physicians continued through the 1980s with little substantial changes. [52]

Apartheid healthcare persisted. Many hospitals admitted little or no Black patients, and few admitted Medicare and Medicaid patients. Poor Black patients primarily remained at underfunded city or Black hospitals. Although Medicare and Medicaid allowed more indigent patients to receive hospital care, the cost of treatment typically exceeded the

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[51] Beatrix Hoffman, "The Medical Civil Rights Movement and Access to Healthcare" (Bethesda, MD: U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2014).
[52] P. Preston Reynolds, "Professional and Hospital Discrimination and the US Court of Appeals Fourth Circuit 1956–1967," *American Journal of Public Health*, 94:5 (May 2004), 710-720.

compensation for treatment, leaving those hospitals financially struggling and affecting their quality of care.

CONTINUED INEQUALITY

While the immediate years after integration saw some health gains for African Americans, particularly for those who previously had no access at all, improvements largely stagnated after 1975. Starting in the 1980s, Black morality began to increase again, and African American life expectancy declined. With White flight to the suburbs, Black residents were increasingly concentrated in urban cores with underfunded and lower-quality healthcare.[53]

In the face of continued health disparity, African American groups again provided their own medical services. Leonidas H. Berry founded an organization named the "Flying Black Medics." Sponsored by the Methodist Episcopal Church and local community groups, the group began flights in 1970 from Chicago to Cairo, Illinois, providing free medical care and supplies to poor African Americans.[54] In the late 1960s, the Black Panther Party became involved in healthcare. The national organization required all chapters to provide health clinics due to continued health discrimination and inequality. The Panthers also launched a sickle cell anemia awareness campaign, providing education and free screening for the disease, which the organization felt was understudied and underfunded as it disproportionately affected African Americans.[55]

The Black Panther Party's health program further reflected the distrust of medical institutions. As detailed earlier, physicians used enslaved African Americans for medical experiments. Hospitals and prisons continued this practice after slavery ended, and medical colleges stole African American cadavers for student training. Perhaps the most

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[53] Byrd and Clayton, "Race, Medicine, and Healthcare in the United States," 319.
[54] Hoffman, "The Medical Civil Rights Movement."
[55] Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

famous example of medical exploitation was the Tuskegee Experiment, started by the U.S. Public Health Service in 1932. The program recruited 600 Black men—399 with syphilis, and 201 not infected—for a study on the effects of the disease. Administrators promised free medical treatment for participants. However, physicians did not inform the men of the purpose of the study and did not treat the individuals who had syphilis, even after penicillin was discovered as a cure in 1947. In 1972, the Associated Press reported on the story, leading to a public outcry and investigations. Recent research has demonstrated that the history of medical exploitation, particularly the Tuskegee Experiment, has led African Americans to be more distrustful of doctors and less likely to use healthcare services, contributing to the higher mortality rare.[56]

In the 1980s, the increase in the Black mortality rate also corresponded with the decreased funding for hospitals that predominantly served the African American community. State aid declined dramatically, particularly with the economic recession. The number of Black hospitals rapidly plummeted as a result. From 1961 to 1988, forty-nine Black hospitals closed, including Chicago's Provident Hospital, the first Black-operated hospital in the country.[57]

CONCLUSION

Health inequality persists in America. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention found that African Americans have a significantly shorter life expectancy (75.1 years) than Whites (78.7). African Americans suffer from higher rates of illness and health problems; the CDC estimates that 13.6% of African Americans are in poor health compared to 9.5% of Whites. The overall mortality rate has dropped for all races in the

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[56] Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (Norwell, MA: Anchor, 2008).

[57] Mitchell F. Rice and Woodrow Jones, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital: From Slavery to Segregation to Integration* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994), 101.

past two decades, driven by declining deaths from cancer, heart attacks, and strokes. However, African Americans still have a mortality rate 16% higher than Whites (down from 33% in 1999), and are more likely to die at every age. The discrepancy is particularly notable in infant mortality—a rate of 10.93 per 1,000 for Blacks and 4.89 per 1,000 for Whites—and in maternal deaths with a rate of 43.5 Black deaths per 100,000 live births compared to 12.7 White deaths per 100,000 live births.[58]

Health inequality reflects multiple factors: higher rates of unemployment, obesity, and poverty; and lower rates of home ownership, education, and wealth. African Americans also continue to have less access to welfare: 11.2% under the age of 65 do not have healthcare, compared to 7.5 of Whites. Researchers have also demonstrated that racial discrimination, including from the healthcare system itself, also negatively impacts health.[59] Inequality continues in the medical profession, too. While making up 12% of the overall population, less than 6% of physicians and surgeons are Black.[60]

The roots of health inequality date back to the beginning of this country. Treated as racially inferior, neglected or excluded by White healthcare systems and as the victims of systematic and institutionalized racism and segregation, African Americans have suffered higher rates of disease and mortality than White Americans throughout this country's history. African Americans have fought for increased access; provided care for themselves in various forms, from enslaved midwives to Black hospitals; and made important contributions to the medical field. However, the historical vestiges of a two-tiered healthcare system remain as deeply entrenched as other aspects of structural racism.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the "slave health deficit" and how has it persisted?

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[58] "Black Health, United States, 2016: With Chartbook on Long-term Trends in Health" (Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2017).
[59] Ibid.
[60] Joseph P. Williams, "Why America Needs More Black Doctors," *U.S. News & World Report*, August 31, 2018.

2. What barriers have historically prevented African Americans from becoming physicians?
3. How have African Americans provided healthcare for themselves?
4. What changes could be made to the healthcare system to increase African American access?

Writing Prompt

Studies have found that African Americans are much less likely to trust physicians, hospitals, and the healthcare system. As a result, they are also less likely to seek treatment, contributing to higher mortality rates. Many attribute this distrust to historical episodes of medical exploitation like the Tuskegee Experiment. Others highlight the history of racism and discrimination by healthcare providers. Taking a historical perspective, what do you believe has contributed to this mistrust? What can be done to address this issue and improve trust in healthcare?

Chapter 19

Black Radicalism, Black Consciousness, Black History, and Black YouTube: A New Age Revolution

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INTRODUCTION

A new age Black revolution is currently waging on YouTube by passionate African American social media personalities determined to help Black people defeat and rise above White supremacy's boundaries.[1] In recent years, social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, BlogTalkRadio, and YouTube have reformatted Black radicalism in the United States by providing zealous African American activists with an online platform to boldly express their concerns and gain a following by using the internet. As a result, significant shifts in Black revolutionary thought or consciousness and new protest methods have developed in combination with the rapid growth in human dependency on computer capabilities.[2] The new virtual home for Black resistance to White-led racial oppression is rooted inside the Black radical tradition of remaining committed to an idealized, Black liberationist goal of securing self-regulating social, political, cultural, and economic freedom for people of African descent worldwide.

Though many African Americans use social media to express their discontent with racial oppression, the online Black resisters of focus are small in number, yet large in influence. The Black YouTube rebels in this study are either a part of or affiliated with the following YouTube channels: BlackNews102; SaNeterTV, BlackMagik363; BabaTVEveryTimeFire; ZaZa; KnowTheLedgeMedia; YoungPharaoh; SiriusMindz; BrotherBenX; TariqRadio; PrinceIfatunde; YourBlackWorld; and UrbanX.TV. The thought

[1] Jonathan M. Cox, "The Source of a Movement: Making the Case for Social Media as an Informational Source Using Black Lives Matter." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 11 (2017): 1847-1854.
[2] Ibid.

leaders are both eagerly and often hesitantly referred to as spearheads of the Black Conscious Community. The Black Conscious Community is a conglomerate of sporadically allied African Americans who advocate replacing mainstream Black philosophies and institutions with Afrocentric and Black Nationalist ideas and action. The YouTubers of focus were chosen due to their loose connections and because they are among the most influential and thought-provoking in their justifications for the complete transformation of the psyche and physical reality of all people of African descent.[3] Many of the Black YouTube radicals are often offended by the term and categorization of "YouTube Revolutionary" or "Web-Oblutionary" because they believe such titles diminish the importance of their online and in-person work. Yet, the label is appropriate and reflects unique characteristics that make the online Black militants' important voices in the current political and social media landscape.[4] The new virtual presence in Black radical thinking and action amassed by these YouTube radicals are worthy of serious scholarly study because they represent a critical stage of development in Black revolutionary history and consciousness.

AN OVERVIEW OF STAGES OF BLACK RADICALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Black radicalism, militancy, or resistance to White supremacy in the United States has remained a central feature in African American history from the slavery era throughout present times.[5] Whenever repression was present, African Americans used confrontational means to liberate or free themselves from White control. Blacks' combative actions demonstrated the connections between Black radicalism and Black

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[3] KEYOFLIFE Production. "Red Pill Talks the New COINTELPRO & a Code of Conduct for the Black Conscious Community!!!" YouTube, 46:43, January 20, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zGaXN-FlHg&t=150s.

[4] KEYOFLIFE Production. "Red Pill Sounds Off on Conscious Platforms: 'I Have to Publicly Separate My Self from Them." YouTube, 47:51, May 28, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24jEuY93D38.

[5] Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, *Introduction to Futures of Black Radicalism* (London: Verso Books, 2017).

consciousness because they both involve a state of mind that seeks to actively challenge racism through means like spirituality, politics, education, and even violence. Years prior to social media's rise, different forms of Black radicalism emerged to respond to the prevailing types of racial oppression. During Africans' sixteenth to nineteenth-century Middle Passage, many soon-to-be slaves revolted against their White captors. Their resistance methods were both passive (discreet) and active (vigorous).[6] Though detained, Africans always longed to free themselves from their confinement, which was a form of mental, yet passive resistance. Forms of passive resistance also included sabotaging tools and crops and faking illnesses. In contrast to passive Black resistance, one example of active resistance occurred in 1839 on the Spanish *La Amistad* slave ship during the Middle Passage. After the Mende people of Sierra Leone banded together to violently overthrow the White captors who were charged with shipping them from Africa to the Americas for slavery, the Mende resisters attempted to force the remaining Spanish men to steer the ship back to Africa. Instead of sailing to Africa, the White men directed the ship to the East Coast of the United States, which landed on Long Island. Despite the Mende failing to return their slave ship to Africa, they successfully proved their case for freedom in the American courts on the grounds that slave trading (not slavery) had been illegal in the United States since 1808.[7] Similar active forms of resistance occurred during Africans' enslavement period in the United States, particularly in the form of slave revolts. Blacks were expected to accept their inferior status and live under the rules that Whites defined for them. Yet, the pressures of having limited freedom and little control over their own affairs often expanded into a philosophical and concrete arena known as Black radicalism. The concept concerns people who believe in forcefully overthrowing existing political, social, and economic norms to create a new Black reality where Africans worldwide lead their own affairs free from racial oppression.

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[6] Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, "Processes of Exiting the Slave Systems: A Typology," in *Slave Systems: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Enrico Dal Lago and Constantina Katsari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 233-264.

[7] Marcus Rediker, *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

Black radicalism intensified in the hostile, post-slavery environment known as Jim Crow segregation. The racial group's suffering did not go unnoticed by revolutionary-minded Black leaders. In the early 1900s, Marcus Garvey and other similar Pan-Africanists developed radical solutions that included pushes for Blacks in America and around the world uniting to control the lands and live in Africa. Garvey's Pan-Africanist calls were followed by Black Nationalists like Elijah Muhammad, who believed that Blacks in America should separate from mainstream society and form their own. Though Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism became central features in Black radical thought and action, Communism also played a defining role in the Black revolutionary tradition.[8] Ideologically, Communism calls for everyone to have an equal amount of resources and power. Many African Americans also believed Communism was the solution for ending Black oppression. In the United States, Communists were considered radical and enemies to the federal government due to its direct opposition to American economic norms such as capitalism. From the 1930s through the 1950s, the anti-Communist pressures failed to prevent African American singer Paul Robeson and lawyer Benjamin J. Davis from advocating for Communist solutions to help Black people free themselves from socioeconomic and racial depravity.[9] The men's radical calls for Communist action influenced the turbulent 1960s and 1970s era Black Power Movement leaders and organizations such as the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.

In 1966, in Oakland, California, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seal founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in response to police brutality against local African Americans. The Black Panther Party's promotion of armed self-defense and Black Nationalist programs that included providing free breakfast, education, and healthcare

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[8] William L. Van Deburg, *Modern Black Nationalism: From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 23-28, 97-103, 240-250.

[9] Jordan Goodman, *Paul Robeson: A Watched Man* (London: Verso, 2013); William L. Van Deburg. *Modern Black Nationalism: From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 23-28, 97-103, 240-250.

for African Americans rapidly gained the attention of Blacks across the nation. Newton and Seal educated the organization's members on their constitutional rights to carry weapons. Black Panthers were influenced by Black radicals like Malcolm X, who strongly criticized Martin Luther King Jr.'s Civil Rights Movement notions of peaceful demonstrations and Blacks integrating into the mainstream America.[10] From 1952 until 1964, X was a member of the Nation of Islam (NOI), a religious and Black Nationalist organization led by Elijah Muhammad. X popularized NOI radical teachings such as believing White people were devils and promoting African Americans separating from Whites to form their own nation. X also influenced famed boxer Muhammad Ali's adoption of Islam, criticism of Whites' oppression of Blacks, and refusal to fight in the Vietnam War after his 1966 military draft. X's doctrine also played a pivotal role in the Black Panthers' calls for Blacks to stop serving the military. X, Ali, and the Black Panthers believed that African Americans should not help the United States attack other non-White people when the country treated Black people with disdain. Instead, the Black Panthers called for a revolution at home.[11] Not only did the Black radical organization want Black people to defend themselves against White acts of violence, a few of their members like Eldridge Cleaver engaged in gunfights with police. Many members also believed that a violent overthrow of the government was necessary to end the demonization of Black people. Government powerbrokers considered the Black Panthers' attempts to organize, educate, and protect their communities as radical threats to the country's national security and ultimately shattered the organization.[12] The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), led by J. Edgar Hoover, destroyed the Black Panthers by engaging in unlawful tactics including planned assassinations of Black Panthers with a FBI surveillance and infiltration program called COINTELPRO.[13] Though the Black Panthers disbanded in the early 1980s, the organization took Black radicalism in the United States to new heights with its racial pride

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[10] Jeffery O. C. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 57, 86-90, 109, 155, 171, 186.
[11] Ibid., 18, 20, 21, 28, 60,
[12] Ibid, 94-95, 199.
[13] Ibid, 175, 199.

and revolutionary politics. In the early 1990s, Aaron Michaels formed the New Black Panther Party, which Khalid Muhammad and Malik Zulu Shabazz expanded in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Similar to the original Black Panther Party created in 1966, the New Black Panther Party promoted Black Nationalism and Black self-defense. Muhammad's activism was considered so radical by opponents of his Black resistance ideology that in 1993, the United States Congress voted to censure him. Congress' contempt for Muhammad did not stop him and fellow Black revolutionaries from continuing the Black radical tradition of unapologetic attempts to secure complete Black liberation.[14]

In the 1980s, the Afrocentric and African cultural nationalist scholars who were active during the 1960s and 1970s Civil Rights and Black Power Movements such as Molefi Kete Asante, Frances Cress Welsing, Marimba Ani, and Maulana Karenga gained momentum. They were on television shows like *Tony Brown's Journal* and *Phil Donahue* spreading their philosophical ideas for an intellectual and cultural Black revolution.[15] However, similar to the YouTube resisters of study, during the 1960s and 1970s, theoretical divisions existed between Black radical political nationalists and cultural nationalists on which direction was best for defeating African American oppression. In 1969, the Black Panthers and the US Organization led by Karenga, epitomized the rift when a shootout erupted between the two groups at UCLA. Though the F.B.I.'s subversive and questionable COINTELPRO program was largely to blame for the tensions, the Black Panthers' Marxist political and economic inclinations and the US Organization's focus on the re-acclimation of African Americans with African culture reflected the two groups' divergent positions. Both were Black Nationalists who were determined to liberate Blacks from an oppressive system of racial control, but with different approaches and values.

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[14] Christian Adams, *Injustice: Exposing the Racial Agenda of the Obama Justice Department* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2011), 112-116.
[15] Duron Chavis, "Dr. Frances Cress Welsing on *Donahue*," YouTube, 45:01, February 11, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iquXlgRGX7I; Tony Brown, "Tony Brown's Journal—Dr. Maulana Karenga," YouTube, 1:05, December 29, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U60WmAH3jIc.

The same debates are prevalent among the Black YouTube resisters whose YouTube channels' different focuses reflect their varying positions. The present era's YouTube revolts are a continuation of the 1980s recharge of the Nation of Islam, which Louis Farrakhan helped to propel after assuming leadership of the organization in 1981. Farrakhan continued to champion the NOI's promotion of Black Nationalism and Black liberation through the NOI teachings of Black self-dependence. The NOI and Afrocentricity were also instrumental in the creation of Black-Conscious or political hip hop. During the 1980s and early 1990s, rap groups and artists—namely, Public Enemy, X-Klan, Brand Nubian, Queen Latifah, and KRS-One—promoted images and content aimed to reconnect Black people with their African roots, while battling racial oppression and the devastating effects of crack cocaine infesting Black neighborhoods. The hip-hop group NWA also contributed to Black radical political messaging with their Gangsta Rap approach to challenging police brutality against African Americans like the infamous 1991 police beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, California. In the 1990s, Black radicalism remained prevalent in mainstream popular culture, especially with the World Wrestling Federation's (WWF) Nation of Islam-themed wrestling group, the Nation of Domination. In 2013, social media Black activism transformed into a radical Black movement known as Black Lives Matter (BLM).[16] BLM challenged the police killings of unarmed Black men, including Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, and Michael Brown. Many of the murders were filmed and viewed on social media sites such as Facebook and YouTube.[17] Though BLM shared many social media characteristics of the YouTube activists studied in this chapter, it is important to note that the two groups' Black liberationist philosophies, politics, methods, and associations are different. Despite their distinctions, both sects of online radicals reflect the continuation of the Black radical and revolutionary tradition in the United States through the use of modern internet technology.

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[16] Cheryl L. Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

[17] Christopher J. Lebron, *The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

YOUTUBE'S ROLE IN THE ONLINE BLACK RADICALS' DESIRES TO DESTROY AND CREATE A NEW AFRICAN AMERICAN REALITY

Radical Black resistance to racial oppression has occurred in every stage of African American history, leading the revolutionaries to use the resources that are available to communicate and achieve their Black liberationist goals.[18] In discussions regarding the contemporary era of Black radicals who use YouTube as their major expressive outlet, it is important to note that the activists are not a monolith; they have diverse perspectives, backgrounds, styles, strategies, and features. Even with their differences, similarities exist in their sporadic online connections, common beliefs, and overarching aims of Black liberation from what they call White supremacist society. In today's world, social media is a preferred format for many Black radicals for a number of reasons, especially aims that concern creating a new civilization for African people in America and worldwide. Although the online campaigners have gained substantial followers in their rejection of Black racial oppression through the use of social media sites like BlogTalkRadio, Twitter, and Facebook, YouTube serves as the primary audiovisual way for them to express their views. YouTube is a free, easy-access way for online Black activists to instantly get their points across to millions of people by posting videos that are easily searchable by topic and person, which is different from other social media sites like Facebook that have often closed or private "Friend" models that make searching topics and videos challenging. Additionally, viewers can watch billions of hours of available content whenever they desire and without the pressures of following, friending, joining, or adding that other social media sites may require. The Google-owned company also allows a more intimate and personal online exchange because of its real-time, conversational video displays that provide watchers with an ability to closely analyze the words, movements, homes, cars, families, clothes, and other features displayed in the videos. Furthermore, YouTube Chat allows YouTube personalities to host instantaneous conversations, while interacting with

[18] Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans.* (New York: Orbis Books, 1998), vii-x.

their viewers in the chat feature. There are also economic benefits for users who upload content on YouTube because the social media company monetizes videos and often pays uploaders for the number of views, likes, and subscribers received. YouTubers can ask their viewers to donate to their personal crowd funding campaigns on websites like Patreon, PayPal, and GoFundMe. African Americans in particular use social media at higher rates than other racial groups, which strengthens the Black revolutionaries' online cause and relevance.[19] More importantly, YouTube also provides their users with large room for freedom of speech and content which allows the Black radicals to articulate their unorthodox messages. With the growing popularity of social media, it is likely the Black revolutionary presence would exist within widely-used and highly-influential online spaces like YouTube. The YouTube rebels use their online platform to express fiery rhetoric that challenges the White power structure's anti-Black leanings and advocate for a Black-owned and controlled reality.

A major factor in Black radical thought and practice rests in communicating with their African American counterparts in hopes of awakening them from what the revolutionaries consider a deep sleep or state of unconsciousness that Whites forced upon the racial group during slavery and Jim Crow. Many Black radicals believe that suffering from centuries of constant White oppression have placed African Americans' convictions, consciousness, political awareness, views of the world, everyday habits, and self-will in a state of darkness and fear. From their perspectives, the continual repression has limited the ability of people of African descent to create their own, thriving, oppression-free, Black-dominated society. The online activists maintain that Blacks are unaware that they counterproductively further their own subjugation and strengthen White supremacy when they participate in mainstream society avenues such as practicing Christianity; working in and spending money at companies that are not owned by similar-minded Black-conscious persons; serving in the military; receiving an education in predominantly White

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[19] Harriot, Michael, "National Urban League's 2018 'State of Black America:' Tech Companies Don't Care About Employing Black People," *The Root*, May 4, 2018, accessed July 31, 2018. https://www.theroot.com/national-urban-leagues-2018-state-of-black-america-tec-1825777076

primary and secondary institutions; voting in elections; and even visiting Westernized hospitals and doctors. The above-mentioned beliefs stem primarily from their ideas that White people create and control these institutions for their own Eurocentric or White interests to further their White culture and power. Many of the Black radicals' Black counterparts actively seek White acceptance and practice assimilationist over liberationist politics, meaning that they would rather manage the challenges of living in a discriminatory society than work to liberate or free themselves from the oppression entirely. Black middle and upper-class members who lean more towards adopting European standards of living, dress, politics, religion, and other attributable features and reject Black revolutionary thought and practice are major disappointments and concern for the online resisters. The YouTube radicals often criticize members of their same racial group for aiding the perpetuation of White supremacy more than they attack White supremacists.[20]

Many Black radicals consider the revolution, evolution, or transformation of Black society vital to the survival of African Americans and other Africans globally. From the online radicals' points of view, Black people living in a White supremacist society has disrupted the group's ability to thrive inside a civilization created by them that promotes Black success and a complete reclamation of their indigenous culture. The Black resisters argue that tragedies like slavery, Jim Crow, and colonialism are bound to happen again

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[20] The ideas expressed by the Black YouTubers highlighted in this writing stem from an array of YouTube channels and perspectives. For further information on the online activists' political philosophies and desires see: BLACKNEWS102, "Sankofa And Dr. Issa Correct Tazaryach Pseudo Information on Marcus Garvey RBG." YouTube, 1:01:29, June 11, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dik0Vo4MI0; GENERAL SETI. "No Apologies for Being a Soldier for Afrakan Liberation!!!" YouTube, 1:02:19, August 10, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0v8h8gegIM; Your Black World. "The Dr. Boyce Watkins reaction to Umar Johnson v Roland Martin Interview." YouTube, 1:07:30, June 10, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaFGctYmMqg; Tariq Nasheed, "Tariq Nasheed Talks about Defining the Narrative." YouTube, 2:59:19, July 22, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mr6BJeadghE; Sirius Mindz. "Mind Control in the Music Industry w/ Professor Griff on WSHR 6 6 2018." YouTube, 1:30:14, June 6, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57KUtEol710&t=2647s; BABATV EVERYTIMEFIRE, "Atty Malik Zulu Shabazz States Our Case." YouTube, 37:41, April 21, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6MNloQpnyk&t=1900s;.

unless a strong, united, regenerated, independent, conscious or awake Black civilization exists. According to the online revolutionaries, the creation of a Black-dominated or independent society does not necessarily mean a civilization where Whites are attacked, vilified, or dominated in the same way that White supremacy has affected Black people. Hence, the Black rebels' main purpose is not advocating for Black supremacy based upon racial superiority or hate because of one's skin color alone. Violence is rarely advocated by the Black YouTube resisters, although self-defense is a central underpinning in their discussions. Laws against the internet promotion of violence may prevent public discussions of armed resistance. Instead they are militant, forceful, radical, rebellious, and revolutionary in their online intensity, determination, urgency, rhetoric, and nonconformist ideologies.[21]

In response to the European and American model of racism based upon skin coloration, the Black radicals' calls for an independent Black civilization existing to provide a safe space for people of African descent to live and succeed without the worries of racial discrimination and disconnection from their pre-slavery, pre-colonial culture. Inside of their Black world model, all people of African descent would develop an Afrocentric and Black nationalist mentality, then unite to create and operate their own educational, government, political, economic, military, family, and other necessary institutions. The online activists have found an influential companion in social media, particularly YouTube, for achieving their goals of educating African people across the Diaspora on how to transcend their inferiority and dominate their own affairs. Social media is a powerful wake-up tool that provides the Black revolutionaries with a direct reach into the minds of limitless viewers. The purpose of the Black radical messaging online is to inform and influence their audience's everyday actions. The practical effects of the new age, internet-to-in-person Black revolution is facilitated on sites like YouTube and measured by how intensely the Black social media rebels' information campaign penetrates into and guides the real lives of their viewers. If the YouTube revolutionaries can spark an awareness or

[21] Ibid.

consciousness inside their followers that leads them to contribute to the idealized, independent Black Nation, then the online dissenters have scored a victory.

HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES OF THE BLACK YOUTUBE RADICALS

Black history and philosophical thought serve as the primary foundation of the online African American rebels' purpose and ideology. In their goal of constructing an alternative Black reality, they regularly hold in high esteem and reference Afrocentric, Pan-Africanist, Black Nationalist, Black Liberation Religion and Spirituality, and Afrofuturist thinkers, organizations, leaders, events, and points of view. Although the five schools of thought are not the same concepts, they are similar in their overall goals of changing the minds of Black people for the purpose of creating a new African experience. The social media influencers incorporate Black radical history and philosophy to help African Americans recover from what they believe is a mental, political, cultural, and social theft that prevents Blacks from attaining freedom and victory. As a result, religion, spirituality, organization, politics, education, technology, economics, aesthetics, clothes, symbols, jewelry, identity, natural hair, diet, health, naturalism, policing, discipline, language, and music derived from their conception of a Black-conscious and African indigenous historical and philosophical context are important.[22]

BLACK LIBERATION RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Black Liberation Religion and Spirituality, or the notion of practicing racially-specific, spiritual liberation for African and African American, serves a major foundation of the online rebels' theoretical framework. Many of the YouTube revolutionaries' identities, motivations, and beliefs derive from spiritual movements that value combining political and social justice with doctrinal practices specifically tailored to Black people and their

[22] Ibid.

liberation. Among them are the Moorish Science Temple of America, Nation of Islam, Black Hebrew Israelites, Nation of Gods and Earths, Rastafari, Afrikan Village, Temple of New African Thought; Shrine of the Black Madonna, and Nuwaubian Nation.[23] A faction of Black resisters also practice traditional African spiritual systems like Kemetic or Egyptian science, which involves African Americans reconnecting with religious cults from the ancient African civilization known as *Egypt* to Western scholars and *Kemet* to the ancient Egyptians themselves. Many members of the online Black Conscious Community also practice African spirituality systems such as Vodun, Ifa, Palo, Candomblé, and Santeria.[24] Another group follows occultism, mysticism, and metaphysics, while a small minority considers themselves Atheists and Agnostics.[25] In mainstream society where the majority of African Americans since the slavery era have practiced Christianity, the Black Conscious Community's Black liberation religious and spiritual orientations are often considered radical. In contrast, the YouTube radicals often rally against African Americans practicing Christianity because they consider the theology a "slave religion" or a religion that White slave masters forced upon Africans in the Americas.[26] Instead, they argue that African Americans should practice their pre-slavery and pre-colonial religions and spiritual systems to free themselves from racial oppression.

BLACK NATIONALISM

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[23] Saneter Studios, "The Evolution Conference Panel." YouTube, 46:43, April 12, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1sbcs5WPB8.
[24]Ibid; blackmagic363, "Bro. Oba: Understanding the Fundamentals of Urban Voodoo and Alchemy." YouTube, 2:11:06, November 12, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5o-31zf-j3E.
[25] blackmagic363, "Dr. Phil Valentine, Aseer the Duke of Tiers, and Bro. Panic: Gathering of the Metaphysical Masters." YouTube, 18:22, June 14, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYlasVLrzEg; Real Black Atheist Scholar, "Real Black Atheist Scholar Presents: The Importance of Real Black Atheism." YouTube, 58:20, December 29, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iR2Kxxb1N8//
[26] djvlad, "Dr. Wesley Muhammad on Black Christianity Being Slave Making Religion (Part 1)." YouTube, 14:19, August 23, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_vds-lzCEI.

Historical and philosophical Black Nationalism also drives the online rebels' crusade. Black Nationalism is the idea that Black people should create their own distinct educational, religious, economic, cultural, political, social, and even defense institutions. Black Nationalism is a concept that African Americans have adopted since their enslavement. Martin Delany, an African American doctor, soldier, and abolitionist, is often considered the father of Black Nationalism. In 1850, after Delany and two fellow African Americans were dismissed from Harvard Medical School because of their race, Delany concluded that Black people needed to create their own establishments to survive in America. As slavery and racism continued to torment African Americans in the United States, Delany's promotion of Black Nationalism intensified. In 1852, he published *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*. In the book, he expressed his disillusionment with African Americans' ability to ever overcome racial repression in the United States. Instead, he insisted that Blacks in America should emigrate to Africa, the Caribbean, or Latin America and create their own new nation. Though Delany failed to realize his goal of a mass exodus of African Americans nationalizing in another geographic region, his Black Nationalist calls guided the philosophies of many successive African American organizations and leaders.[27] The Nation of Islam, Black Panthers, New Black Panther Party, and the modern-day social media Black Conscious Community are parts of Delany's legacy. A major tenet of Black Nationalism is non-conformism, non-assimilation, and non-integration into mainstream or White-dominated society. Black Nationalists believe that Blacks should found, support, and participate in their own establishments. [28] The political philosophy is therefore considered revolutionary, radical, or extreme because Black Nationalism involves Black people consciously or purposely creating new institutions and ideas that counter those found in everyday society.

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[27] Robert S. Levine, ed., *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
[28] Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

The YouTube rebels have managed to inspire and create Black Nationalistic endeavors by-way of the internet. In their calls for Black-owned and controlled enterprises, they utilize online crowd funding campaigns to finance their Black-conscious activities that include backing African centered K-12 schools, creating African inspired holistic health centers, and aiding their ability to spend time online spreading their Black Nationalist messages. They often use their social media platforms to promote their personal business endeavors and products. Vending is also a major Black Nationalist activity that the online rebels conduct in-person. Many of their merchandise are available for online purchases; however, at Black-conscious events, numerous online resisters sell their products at vending tables. Websites like WeBuyBlack.com and online movements such as OneUnited Bank Black Money Matters and the Tulsa Real Estate Fund are also examples of new age, online Black Nationalism.[29] Although the YouTube radicals face challenges in creating their fully independent Black Nation, they still manage to find creative ways explain their Black Nationalists positions to their audience while encouraging them to support their online and in-person ventures, especially their independent Black media undertakings.

PAN-AFRICANISM

Pan-Africanism is another political and philosophical standpoint of the online activists. Pan-Africanism is a concept that Black or African people from all over the globe should gain racial pride and unite to improve the social, economic, and political condition of Africans wherever they live. The ideological context stems from the history of slavery in the Americas and Caribbean and colonialism in Africa forcing Africans across the Diaspora into an inferior political and social status. Over the course of modern history, many notable Pan-African movements and leaders have attempted to unite Africans globally to

[29] blackmagic363, "Red and Blue Pill speak at BAM Festival with Black Businesses." YouTube, 1:04:29, May 26, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muYdBmnTT4A&t=1485s.

help them recover from the hardships of racial discrimination at-large. Edward Wilmot Blyden was an avid Pan-Africanist born in the Caribbean in 1832. He moved to Liberia, a country in West Africa, with African Americans who emigrated to the country during slavery. Blyden wrote many influential writings advocating for Pan-Africanism because he believed the political philosophy was the only method for Black people around the world to have political, social, and economic freedom. He died in 1917. Blyden's Pan-African activities were followed by many Black leaders, namely Haile Selassie, Kwame Nkrumah, Thomas Sankara, Malcolm X, W. E. B. Du Bois, Kwame Ture, and Muammar Gaddafi. However, Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican who lived from 1887 to 1940, was one of the most popular Pan-Africanist. During the early 1900s, he led the largest Pan-African political organization to ever exist, which was known as the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL). The organization's members followed and supported Garvey's plans of removing European colonial powers from Africa so that non-continental and continental Africans could own and control African resources and politics. [30]

Garvey's iconic Red, Black, and Green Pan-African flag is a major inspiration for YouTube and on-the-ground radicals such as the Pan-African Liberation Movement in Baltimore, Maryland. They commonly sport the colors and call themselves "RBGs" to reflect their historical and political Pan-African orientations.[31] The RBG movement has gained mainstream appeal. For example, in 2018 the shoe company Nike released the RBG Equality Air Force One shoes, which display the Pan-African flag. The YouTube resisters' online and in-person influence and business concepts likely led Nike and other major companies to fulfill a demand for Pan-African attire.[32] Before mainstream

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[30] Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[31] Saneter Studios, "When RBG Meets Hebrew Israelism & Discussing Unity and True Activism." YouTube, 20:13, April 8, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBMP1iK7thc.
[32] "The Nike Air Force 1 High Will Be Part of Next Year's Black History Month Lineup." Sole Collector, last modified December 3, 2017, accessed July 31, 2018. https://solecollector.com/news/2017/12/bhm-nike-air-force-1-high-2018-release-date.

corporations ventured into the modern-day commercialization of Black-consciousness, Black revolutionary entrepreneurs such as Tariq Edmondson created the African Pride Sneaker and Rocklin Hotep Negash launched his African-themed clothing and shoe company, Negash Apparel and Footwear. Although many of the online Black rebels are advocates of Pan-Africanism, many have a distrustful opinion of modern-day Africans from the continent of Africa. A large portion of the YouTube radicals believe that many continental Africans would rather participate in White supremacist institutions over uniting with African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, and other Blacks to own and control Black affairs.[33] Despite their disappointments with continental Africans who fail to take strong Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanists stances similar to South African political leader, Julius Malema, the social media activists promote a Pan-African flag and agenda of Africans from all over the world tackling global Black oppression through political, social, and economic unity.

AFROCENTRICITY

Afrocentricity also drives the YouTube protestors' quests to liberate African Americans and all Black people around the world from what they call the system of White supremacy. Afrocentricity is a philosophical concept that was defined and popularized with Temple University scholar Molefi Kete Asante's *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (1980).[34] According to Asante, Afrocentricity is an intellectual paradigm that involves interpreting the world from an African perspective. Essentially, Afrocentrists argue that because of the demanding role that Eurocentrism or White domination has played in the lives of Black people in America and globally, the manner in which they view reality derives from a White perspective. For example, an Afrocentrist might ask why African

[33] BLACKNEWS102. "Sa Neter with His African Brothers Exposing the Coons Moors Sell Outs." YouTube, 35:33, July 28, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHoCDEptNWc.
[34] Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (African American Images: 2003).

Americans consider a European-style suit and tie professional or business attire, or why do African Americans speak English, with no knowledge of traditional African languages? Instead, they would encourage Black people to question and understand what professional attire and language consisted of in Africa before outside groups like the Arabs and Europeans invaded the continent and imposed their Arabian and European norms and traditions on Africans. The Afrocentric idea is that at all times and on any occasion Black people should centralize and integrate African life, culture, and traditions that existed before outsiders, especially Whites, changed the African and African American reality.[35]

The online radicals uphold many prominent Afrocentric scholars, organizations, movements, and traditions in high esteem while using them as a template for establishing how they believe Black people should conduct themselves. Afrocentric scholars commonly referenced include Cheihk Anta Diop, Chancellor Williams, George G.M. James, John Henrik Clarke, Amos Wilson, Yosef Ben-Jochannan, Joy DeGruy, Frances Cress Welsing, Ivan Van Sertima, James Smalls, Leonard Jefferies, Mfundishi Jhutyms, and Reggie Mabry. Along with Afrocentric scholars, race critics such as Steve Cokely, Dick Gregory, and Neely Fuller Jr. are often referenced by the YouTube activists. In their quests to achieve their Black liberationist goals, the online influencers often integrate philosophical concepts from Afrocentric traditions especially Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is an African and African American holiday created in 1966 by Maulana Karenga, an Afrocentric scholar, African cultural nationalist, and the leader of the US Organization (US). The YouTube resisters often incorporate the tenets of Kwanzaa to explain how they believe the Black community should operate free themselves from their oppressed conditions. Kwanzaa is celebrated every year between December 26th and January 1st and includes seven principles known as the *Nguzo Saba*. One of the seven principles is celebrated on every day of Kwanzaa, which include: 1. *Umoja* (Unity); 2. *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination); 3. *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility); 4. *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics); 5. *Nia*

[35] Ibid.

(Purpose); 6. *Kuumba* (Creativity); 7. *Imani* (Faith).[36] Every faction of the online resisters promotes Kwanzaa and Afrocentric values in their attempts to create a new pro-Black reality in either explicit or implicit ways.

More importantly, the YouTube rebels use the works of Afrocentric scholars trained in traditional Western colleges and universities as the basis of many of their assumptions. Though they respect the work of a select groups of Black academics who they believe are in line with the Black Nationalists, Pan-Africanists, Afrocentric, and Black Conscious agenda, most of the social media activists do not have college or university degrees or training. Many of the YouTube influencers are self-taught, street and online scholars who distrust the standard K-12 and post-secondary educational institutions. Many YouTube revolutionists dismiss orthodox schooling as the "White Man's Education" system, meaning inherently anti-Black.[37] Instead, they have formulated their own educational paradigms and schools of thought and use YouTube to educate their viewers on disciplines including history, science, religion, business, music, art, film, anthropology, medicine, physical education, sociology, military science, psychology, politics, and technology. Education is extremely important to the YouTube radicals' purpose, activities, and cause because they believe that White supremacy has purposely led Black people almost to their demise through misinformation and inaccurate education, thereby furthering Black inferiority and White superiority. In 1933, Carter G. Woodson, a famous African American historian, raised the same issues in *The Mis-Education of the Negro*.[38] Like Woodson, the YouTube radicals have attempted to counter what they consider a distorted education system by creating their own online and in-person education systems that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Aboriginal Medical Association and University (Atlanta, Georgia)

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[36] Keith A. Mayes. *Kwanzaa: Black Power and the Making of the African American Black Holiday* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
[37] NehemiYah, "Dr. Umar Johnson (Exposes the Mis-Education 2012) Full Lecture," YouTube, 3:25:55, October 1, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g64OSkGYFpQ.
[38] Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (Create Space Independent Publishing, 1933).

- Amen Ra Squad University (Online)
- Black Liberation Radio (Online)
- The Black Business School (Online)
- Huey P. Newton Gun Club (Dallas, Texas)
- Meta Center of Chicago (Chicago, Illinois)
- Moorish School of Law and History (Baltimore, Maryland)
- Muhammad University of Islam (Chicago, Illinois)
- Queen Aufa Sacred Wellness University (New York, New York)
- Shabazz University (Online)
- University of Kemetian Science (DeLand, Florida)
- Unlearn to Relearn Academy (Atlanta, Georgia)
- Usha Herbal Research Institute (Honduras).

The formation of these Black-owned and -created educational institutions reflect the Black Conscious Community's attempts to combine Black Liberation Religion and Spirituality, Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity, and other Black Conscious schools of thought to achieve their goal of using the internet to spur a Black revolution or transformation of the mental and physical reality of Black people through alternative or outside of the mainstream measures. Black Conscious bookstores such as Black and Nobel (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Black to the Basics Bookstore (Grambling, Louisiana), Everyone's Place (Baltimore, Maryland), and Nubian Bookstore (Morrow, Georgia) aid the Black radical cause by providing materials necessary for Black-centered activities. The purposeful avoidance of typical academic establishments, along with the creation of Black Conscious educational institutions is often considered radical, drastic, or extreme by those who disagree with their ideas, methods, and efforts. However, for the YouTube activists, the radical and revolutionary criticisms are celebrated because they are deliberately attempting to disrupt accepted norms.

AFROFUTURISM

Afrofuturism also plays a significant role in the social media rebels' online to in-person Black revolutionary pursuits. Afrofuturist philosophy involves combining art, fashion, science fiction, fantasy, history, technology, spirituality, cosmology, meditation, and mysticism with Afrocentricity to create a new future for Black people in the U.S. and across the globe. In 1993, Mark Dery, a White cultural critic, coined the term Afrofuturism in his "Black to the Future" essay, in which he interviewed Samuel Delany, Tricia Rose, and Greg Tate about their Afrofuturistic works and concepts. Black music artists who have been noted to display and express Afrofuturistic characteristics include Erykah Badu, Earth Wind and Fire, Jimi Hendrix, Lauryn Hill, Public Enemy, Sun Ra, Jill Scott, and Solange. Festivals like AfroPunk held annually in Brooklyn, New York, are also associated with Afrofuturism. Science fiction movies and comics *Space is the Place* (1974), *Get Out* (2017), and *Black Panther* (2018), are also considered Afrofuturistic because they merge esoteric science fiction with a new Black future where Africans are in the superior position.[39]

The YouTube resisters rely on Afrofuturism, especially the mystical and science fiction elements, to search for and explain deeper meanings and interpretations of life and reality. Major motivations for the radicals' Afrofuturist leanings stem from their belief that nothing in the world actually functions in the manner that humans believe. As a result, the social media activists constantly endeavor to decode, interpret, or unravel what they consider the hidden meaning to life, cosmic, and natural events. The YouTubers often combine concepts from quantum and theoretical physics with Afrofuturism to decipher and predict what events like dreams, solar eclipses, natural disasters, and Super Bowl winners and subjects like astrology, numerology, and melanin mean for Black people's past, present, and future. [40] Reasoning stems from their notions that humans,

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[39] Ytasha L. Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture* (Chicago, Lawrence Hill Books, 2013).

[40] blackmagic363, "Aron Ramses speaks on AfroFuturism, Conscious Science Fiction, and Fantasy Culture." YouTube, 31:33, July 2, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODeW59zKSnI.

especially people of African descent, are socially programmed or forced into a confusing mental maze by White exploiters who seek to control their minds and prevent them from understanding and freeing themselves from their oppression. The Black YouTubers utilize their online voices to offer solutions for the alleged zombie-state of Black people. The majority of their solutions is steeped in an ancient Egyptian or Kemetic proverb, "Man, Know Thyself." The online resisters believe that if Black people know their true powers and history, the group would return to their pre-slavery and pre-colonial greatness.[41] For these reasons, Afrofuturism is principal in the online radicals' revolutionary and Black Conscious platform because the philosophy concerns transforming the mind and manipulating reality to liberate Black people from their assumed unconsciousness and inability to rise above oppression.

ONLINE PROFILES OF A FEW BLACK YOUTUBE REBELS

The online radicals' YouTube profiles reflect the combination of Black Liberation Religion and Spirituality, Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity, and Afrofuturism in their Black revolutionary thinking and action. Each YouTuber's particular perspective determines the degree to which each philosophical or historical school of thought they highlight. In other words, if one of the activists leans more toward African-centered education as a solution for ending Black suffering, then Afrocentricity and Afrocentric scholars' ideas may form the basis or theme of their YouTube channel. As such, the majority of their topics, opinions, and audience may center within that particular YouTuber's Afrocentric frame of reference. There are also many online radicals who approach their channel in a manner that applies a broad combination of Religion and Spirituality, Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity, and Afrofuturism to deliver their content, making their particular frame of reference indistinguishable. Despite the

[41] blackmagic363. "Mfundishi: Ancient Kemetic Spirituality Is the Parent of All Modern Religions." YouTube, 29:51, April 13, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtxWAHj04dM.

differences in their styles and perspectives, the aforementioned schools of thought guide all of the Black activists' revolutionary commentary and are the unique substances that make them a part of the Black Conscious Community.[42]

There are also a number of other similarities in the Black Conscious YouTubers' online profiles, perspectives, and methods of delivering their radical messages. The majority of the revolutionary YouTubers is socially, politically, and economically conservative, yet liberal in their notions of free thinking, and they are indifferent to the Democrats, Republicans, and mainstream politics at-large. Following a path laid forth by their Black radical predecessors such as Noble Drew Ali, Marcus Garvey, and Elijah Muhammad, the YouTube resisters' forms of Black conservatism are rooted in their notions of African traditionalism, Black Nationalism, and an overall distrust of conventional political systems. Alhough they are skeptical of the political system, Blacks receiving government reparations for slavery and Jim Crow is a priority issue for the social media activists. The online revolutionaries are also conservative in their views on homosexuality and feminism. The majority believe that same-sex relations are unnatural and in opposition to African notions of complementary relationships between man, woman, and child.[43] With regard to gender roles, many online radicals believe that the Black man should lead and protect the Black woman and family.[44] The YouTube radicals also share similarities in their naming practices. The majority use a personal and online moniker that may reflect their spiritual or political orientations. Overall, the YouTube resisters seeking to spark a Black psychological and physical revolution are distinguishable because their messages and YouTube channels are centered in the five recurring schools of Black radical thought commonly associated with the Black Conscious Community.

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[42] Phill T. Moreland, "(Part 2) Red Pill Builds on Conscious Community, Fake Teachers, and More." YouTube, 27:29, September 30, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vijH_HZN1HU&t=1s.

[43] ForbezDVDPromo, "Should Gays Be Allowed to Teach in the Conscious Community? (Red Pill, Bro Polight, Sutek,Sa Neter)." YouTube, 9:41, June 18, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_Jf-vmSLxQ.

[44] blackmagic363, "Mfundishi: Matriarchy vs. Patriarchy: What is Best for the Black Family?" YouTube, 45:31, October 24, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bF_sSCwLMnk.

Many of the Black radical YouTubers are either housed in or influenced by the Black Conscious activities located in Harlem, New York, on 125th Street. A number of videos are recorded in Harlem due to the location's historic and presently thriving Black revolutionary hub that includes the sale of African-centered merchandise and coalescence of Black radical thinking. A popular Black revolutionary YouTube creator known as Sa Neter is based in Harlem. He is the founder of the House of Konsciousness, a conglomerate of similarly-minded activists who organize events such as Black Conscious debates, information panels, and Black business exchanges. BlackNews102, SaNeterTV, and SaNeterStudios are three of his popular Black revolutionary YouTube channels. His content primarily concerns debates regarding Black Liberation Religion and Spirituality as well as the promotion of Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism. Sa Neter also created the SaNeter Awards, which is a Black Conscious awards show, similar to the Black Power Awards held annually in Atlanta, Georgia. The purpose of the SaNeter and Black Power Awards is to acknowledge the work that Black revolutionaries contribute to their communities. Sa Neter's channels are affiliated with other Harlem-based Black revolutionary channels, including BabaTVEveryTimeFire, which hosts content from Black radicals like Eye Empress Sekmet, Hashim Nzinga, and attorney Malik Zulu Shabazz of the New Black Panther Party. Sekmet, Nzinga, and Shabazz often demand that African Americans become liberated by any means necessary or die, meaning the racial group must take their freedom and not wait on the American political system to provide it. In 2015, Sekmet's arrest for encouraging Blacks to defend themselves against White aggression on YouTube reflected the delicate, yet consequential intersections between online revolutionary activism and the law. The hardhearted freedom or death concept of Black liberation encapsulates the robust energy and character of Sa Neter'a and BabaTV's channels. Even with the men's forceful styles, both have succeeded in uniting with prominent university professors, like Dr. Cornel West and Dr. Jahi Issa, who often appear on their channels. Yet, their hardcore approaches to Black liberation are consistent with

the demanding atmosphere entailed in the Black revolutionary and Black radical tradition.[45]

Hip Hop is a driving force in the Black freedom revolution on YouTube because many of the resisters are inspired by the genre's real-life, hardcore messaging that reflects the pains and struggles of African Americans existing in a racially discriminatory society. BlackMagik363 is another New York-based Black revolutionary YouTube channel created by a Hip-Hop producer known online as Brother Rich. Though Rich rarely shows his face on camera, he commonly interviews contributors who provide Black radical and unorthodox interpretations of current events, politics, and popular culture primarily from a Black Liberation Religion and Spirituality and Afrofuturist perspective. BlackMagik363 is known for its occultist messages that embolden Black people by offering content regarding the group's alleged unused and unfulfilled hidden powers as proclaimed by the channel's spiritual guests. Among the occultist teachers are Noble Anpu, Aseer The Duke of Tiers, Brother Panic, Cambatta, Gano Grills, King Simon, and Dr. Phillip Valentine. Despite having their own YouTube channels, Know The Ledge Media, PhillTMoreland, and KTLEmpowerment, made up of twin brothers Red Pill and Blue Pill, also routinely appear on BlackMagik363. Red Pill and Blue Pill's names derive from the movie *The Matrix.* The brothers are known to make provocative connections between the movie's symbolic meanings regarding human unconsciousness and the complicated way that reality and life are structured for Black people. Yet, the Pills are revered by their activist compatriots for bringing a balancing and diplomatic approach to what is often a chaotic online and in-person Black Conscious Community due to the multiple perspectives and rebellion against mainstream society. The two brothers routinely promote technological and entrepreneurial dominance, veganism, artistry, and health as solutions for attaining Black liberation. Professor Griff, of the Black revolutionary Hip-Hop group Public Enemy, is also affiliated with BlackMagik363 and Red Pill and Blue Pill. Griff is a leader in the online Black radical rebellion. His YouTube channel, Sirius Mindz, mainly focuses on the rap star's

[45] SANETERTV7, "Is The 12 Tribes Chart Right and Exact?" YouTube, 1:35:41, July 3, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne7CAHLKetU.

research into conspiracies such as White secret societies' attempts to undermine Black power and success. Following Griff's lead, a Black revolutionary who goes by the name Black Dot of UrbanX TV, also deals with secret societies, but is heralded by his followers for decoding the hidden meanings behind Hip Hop and serving as a primary driver of global events and world culture.[46]

College-trained and corporate professionals have also joined in the fight to spark a mental and physical Black Revolution by offering information on YouTube. Dr. Umar Johnson, a child psychology expert who calls himself "The Prince of Pan-Africanism" on his Prince Ifatunde channel, has gained mainstream appeal for his radical ideas concerning Pan-Africanism, White supremacy, Black liberation, traditional African religion, and racial psychology. He is best known for research on what he considers a conspiracy to diagnose Black children with Attention Deficient Disorder (ADD) for the purpose of placing them in a school-to-prison pipeline. Johnson is also popular for his crowd-funding campaign to create a Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanist private school for Black males called the Frederick Douglass and Marcus Garvey RBG Leadership Academy. Dr. Boyce Watkins, a former Syracuse University finance professor, is also an active participant in the Black YouTube revolution. He provides a self-help, Black Nationalist message on his YourBlackWorld channel. His goal is to educate Black people on how to become economically independent and in control of their own affairs. He insists that he left his high-profile professor job for those reasons. Watkins routinely invites guests on his channel who share his educational and professional stature and ideas on Black economic empowerment like Dr. Claud Anderson, an economist in the Jimmy Carter presidential administration and author of *Black Labor, White Wealth* (1994). Watkins is also an advocate for including Black Conscious women's voices on his channel—namely, ZaZa Ali, Vicki Dillard, and Meechie X. Ali has her own channel, ZaZa, where she discusses issues that point out the negative effects of Bluetooth and wi-fi technology on Black people and promotes healthy relationships between African Americans in the fight for liberation.

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[46]blackmagic363, "Professor Griff, Lord Jamar, & Black Dot: Celebrities and the Masses Are Waking Up." YouTube, 1:39:31, July 15, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xr26mHyyqpg.

Senior activist women known as Queen Afua and Mama Pill also appear on YouTube and argue that Black people need to properly heal and develop a healthy, African-centered lifestyle in order to free themselves from oppression. Online resisters who go by the names Young Pharaoh Allah, Polight, and Sara Suten Seti believe that Black women are so important and spiritual that the two men consider the women gods. Their reasoning stems from research showing that human life originated in Africa, leading them to assert that Black women gave life to all of humanity. There are also revolutionaries with more traditional radical messaging like Brother Ben X and Rizza Islam, who are young members of the Nation of Islam. Their content follows the disciplined, yet revolutionary Black Nationalist direction of Elijah Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan. Tariq Nasheed is another Black resister intent on freeing Black people from racial oppression by way of YouTube and other social media platforms. Nasheed has amassed a large online following with mainstream appeal, and he has appeared on news networks like *Fox* and *Al Jazeera* to discuss his conceptions of White supremacy dominating the lives of Black people. Nasheed has gained economic success with his *Hidden Colors* documentary series, which endeavors to inform the public of what he considers the hidden greatness of Black people and unknown terroristic activities of Whites. Nasheed and his fellow YouTube resisters who make up the Black Conscious Community have waged an online, on-camera, and in-person information war to free Black people from alleged mental slavery for the purpose of creating a new Black-owned and -controlled reality.[47]

Although the YouTube radicals possess similar characteristics in their methods of communication, abilities to create their own institutions, and ultimate goals, a lack of uniformity exists in their organizational structures and abilities to unify and achieve their aims. Due to political, religious, and cultural differences, the online revolutionaries often find themselves entangled in internet civil wars between fellow Black radical social media comrades, which impedes upon their revolutionary goals. However, the YouTube resisters remain committed to using the internet to secure absolute freedom and liberation for

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47 Tariq Radio, "Tariq Nasheed Talk About Racist 911 Callers." YouTube, 1:39:31, July 1, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0igcgCeijqI.

Africans in the U.S. and globally. Their works are so pronounced that an August 3, 2017, FBI report leaked regarding the highly controversial, Black Identity Extremist (BIE) classification, which highlighted groups and Black revolutionary characteristics associated with the YouTube intellectuals of the Black Conscious Community. The FBI considered BIEs Black separation fanatics who may carry out violence on police out of frustration with police brutality, persistent racism, authority structures, and existing political norms. On December 12, 2017, Rakeem Balogun, a military veteran and member of Guerrilla Mainframe and the Huey P. Newton Gun Club of Dallas, Texas, was the first BIE suspect detained by the FBI. Balogun's arrest was a result of his lack of expressed remorse on Facebook for a slain police officer. Though he won his case, Balogun's supporters and opponents of the BIE argue that the government should focus its attention on White supremacists and their long history of violence and avoid instituting another COINTELPRO debacle.[48] Despite the BIE classification, the war for Black liberation on YouTube and on other successive formats will likely continue because Black radicalism and a desire for a Black liberation is an American tradition that has remained alive since Africans' forced migration to the country in the 1600s. Similarly, Black consciousness, or the mindset that actively identifies racial injustices, will likely continue to promote acts of resistance like those seen on social media today that serve as intentional catalysts for radical and revolutionary change.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the modern-day, Black YouTube rebels combine a complex web of Black Liberation Religion and Spirituality, Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity, and Afrofuturism history and philosophy to challenge global White domination and mainstream African American sociopolitical norms. Wary of conventional educational, political, economic, and cultural institutions, the social media resisters utilize YouTube to

48 BLACKNEWS102, "Rakem Balogun of Guerrilla Mainframe Black Identity Extremist: He Took on the FBI." YouTube, 1:15:02, May 11, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBYkvzs9FZY.

bolster the creation of their idealized Black Nation through a targeted information campaign. The site is a convenient, cost-effective medium that allows each resister to cultivate their own platform to voice their Black revolutionary messages directly to their audiences. The rebels' philosophies and communications are considered radical because they are pro-Black, pro-sovereign, anti-integrationist, and non-conformist. They believe that comprehensive Black liberation is vital to the survival of African Americans and Africans worldwide. The radicals insist that freedom will come only through the complete transformation of the Black mind and, thereafter, the Black reality. Black consciousness is therefore critical to the objectors' missions because they believe that Black people must gain an in-depth knowledge of their pre-slavery and pre-colonial African past to properly understand and shape their present and future. The new age Black revolution on YouTube is a continuation of the Black radical tradition of taking extreme strides to secure Black freedom. The online Black resistance movement symbolizes the depths of Black subjugation, along with the dogged determination of African Americans to overthrow systems, people, institutions, and ideas deemed oppressive. The YouTubers' radical rhetoric, ideologies, and videoed real-life examples represent a new, important stage of development in Black revolutionary history and consciousness.

Review Questions

1. How is YouTube utilized and beneficial to the Black revolutionary cause?
2. Explain the roles that Black consciousness and Black liberation play in shaping Black radicals' YouTube activism.

Writing Prompt

Which people, events, organizations, and schools of thought from various periods in Black history are most closely associated with the Black radical YouTube resisters discussed in this chapter?

Chapter 20

For the Culture: Examining the Electoral Success of African American Incumbents in the U.S. Congress

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"Higher we go, beg and plead for the culture" – Migos

INTRODUCTION

In a country where African Americans were once enslaved, denied citizenship and political office, and relegated to second-class status, a central concern of African American politics has been the benefits of political representation. Political Scientist Hanes Walton Jr. argues that the rise of African American politicians should significantly improve the lives of African Americans because these politicians will utilize their elected office to represent African Americans and pursue policies that will dismantle the legacy of racism for African Americans.[1] Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, African American politicians have won many seats in the United States Congress, yet few studies have explored the electoral success of these politicians. All too often scholars have attributed their success to the creation of majority-minority congressional districts and provided very little attention toward how they represent their constituencies; to be sure, multiple contours have contributed to the electoral success of African American congressional incumbents.

In congressional elections from 1970 to 2012, while majority-minority congressional district are one factor that provides African American House Members with

[1] Hanes Walton Jr., *Black Politics: A Theoretical and Structural Analysis* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1972).

an electoral advantage, their electoral success can also be attributed to the fact that they (1) benefit enormously from the incumbency factor, (2) they often face weak challengers in elections, and (3) they engage in a number of different symbolic and substantive forms of representation that speak to African American culture. Like their White counterparts, African American congressional incumbents are strategic actors and utilize many tactics that maximize their reelection chances.

Despite this long and complicated history of African American political representation within the U.S. Congress, African American members of Congress have been highly successful at representing the various degrees of Black interests both descriptively and substantively. In a nation with such a troubled history concerning the position of African Americans, voting has been one of the essential participatory intermediaries that have connected African Americans to the government. African Americans who were once slaves and second-class citizens have had to fight for political representation by securing and protecting their right to vote. The period of reconstruction ushered in several key constitutional amendments that enabled the rise of African American politicians in the U.S. The 13th amendment outlawed slavery except as a punishment for a crime, the 14th amendment made former slaves citizens, and the 15th amendment prohibited states from disenfranchising voters on the basis of race, religion or creed, which resulted in African Americans temporarily gaining their right to vote. The intentional use of the word "temporary" is important because it is worth noting that while the reconstruction amendments set the political context that made possible the rise of the first class of African Americans elected to the U.S. Congress, the political representation of these politicians would be short-lived due to the rise of violence, terror, literacy tests, poll taxes, and a number of Jim Crow laws that would ignore the enforcement of the reconstruction amendments.

Katherine Tate describes the rise of African American political representation in the U.S. Congress as occurring in three distinct periods: the reconstruction era, 1870-1900; the civil rights generation of Blacks elected to the U.S. House, 1928-1972; and the

post-civil rights era.[2] Since the incorporation of African Americans into the House of Representatives, these politicians have worked to represent the interests of African Americans in both policy and constituency service. Like their White counterparts, once elected to the Congress there is a substantial likelihood that they will be re-elected. For example, according to polling data released by Gallup, the U.S. Congress holds a 21 percent approval rating; on average more than 93 percent of its members are likely to be reelected. What explains this presumed and profound contradiction? Members of Congress of all races have enjoyed a substantial benefit from the incumbency factor, and that individuals will often express their displeasure with Congress as a political institution but hold positive evaluations of their member of Congress.

AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL INCUMBENTS AND THE ELECTION CONNECTION THESIS

Having won an election, African American congressional incumbents benefit from the name recognition, political trust, campaign organizations, fundraising abilities, and descriptive and symbolic forms of representation. While the incumbency factor advantage is not automatic, all of the benefits of being an incumbent work together to help African American congressional incumbents brand themselves. In particular, African American members of Congress can connect culturally to the African American community by engaging in ways that their White counterparts cannot. This engagement of both descriptive and substantive representation allows African American members of Congress to build up credit and trust with their constituency, which assists their success as incumbents and scares off potential challengers in their districts.

David Mayhew argues that the number one goal of politicians is to get reelected and that all of their legislative activity is dedicated to this objective. Mayhew notes three primary activities that members of Congress use to increase their chances of reelection[3]:

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[2] Katherine Tate, *Black Faces in the Mirror* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 25-37.

[3] David Mayhew, *The Election Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

advertising, credit claiming, and position taking.[4] Advertising describes any legislative behavior by members of Congress in which they are attempting to be seen.[5] This behavior includes interviews, ribbon cutting ceremonies, public speeches, and interviews. Credit claiming includes any particularistic policies, earmarks, casework, and bill co-sponsorship.[6] Position taking includes using roll call votes and speeches to stake out a popular position more than to change policy.[7] Under Mayhew's election connection thesis, members of Congress can appear to their constituencies as if they are aggressively fighting to represent their interests in Congress.

While Mayhew's foundational work does not refer to African American members of Congress, there is substantial evidence to support the claim that these tools named in his work have also been utilized by African American members of Congress as well. Like their White counterparts, these tactics allow African American members of Congress to connect and build up credit with their Black constituency. While there are countless examples of African American Congressional incumbents engaging in advertising, credit claiming, and position taking, one such example is the behavior of California's Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters. Affectionately known as "Auntie Maxine," Congresswoman Waters has emerged in many sensational news videos expressing her displeasure with President Donald J. Trump and his agenda. For example, in expressing her opposition to the Trump Administration, Congresswoman Waters has refused to attend State of the Union Addresses. During BET's *Black Girls Rock Award Show* Waters told a largely African American crowd the following:

> "…it's all about staying woke. I'd like to share with you ways that you can help resist this president and Help lead him to impeachment. As you know, no one expected this man to be elected president, and now that he's president he certainly has defined himself. I think he's dangerous. I want everybody to get on the Internet; let's use social

[4] Ibid, 3.
[5] Ibid, 3.
[6] Ibid, 4.
[7] Ibid, 4.

> media to help educate people and to help the elected officials know and understand that this country cannot tolerate Donald Trump. In addition to that, attend rallies, show up. Whether they're talking about the fact that he has not shown his tax returns, or whether or not that they are rallying because of the way that he's trying to undo Obamacare. Whether or not you're rallying because of the kind of people that he's put in his Cabinet like Jeff Sessions, who's a racist, get involved. It's so very important that you know and understand that he does not deserve to be president, and the Congress of the United States must make the decision to impeach him. Really, there's enough evidence now, knowing that he obstructed justice, knowing that he colluded with the Russians to undermine our democracy. and really, if this Congress had the courage of its convictions, it would go ahead and initiate impeachment, but we've got to make believers out of them. We've got to push them. We've got to make sure that they understand the majority citizens of this country would not like him to remain in the Presidency. He doesn't deserve it and our country deserves better."[8]

Even though speeches and videos like the one cited above may appear to be trivial, the Congresswoman is strategically appealing to her constituencies because of her opposition to the Trump administration. This opposition makes her looks like a fighter that is boldly resisting the Trump agenda.

EXPLAINING THE INCUMBENCY FACTOR

Few political issues in the study of American politics have received as much attention and scholarly discourse as have the impact of the incumbency factor in congressional elections, yet these studies have excluded the study of African American incumbents.[9]

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[8] Maxine Waters, "Speech at BET's Black Girls Rock Awards Show," *Essence,* August 23, 2017.

[9] Jamie Carson, Erik Engstrom, and Jason Roberts, "Redistricting, Candidate Entry, and Politics of the Nineteenth-Century U.S. House Elections," *American Journal of Political Science*, 50 (2006), 283-293.

An incumbent is defined as a politician that has been elected and is currently occupying an elected office. Like their White counterparts, African American congressional incumbents benefit enormously from the incumbency factor. Although much of the electoral success of African American Congressional incumbents can be attributed to the creation of majority-Black congressional districts, these politicians (1) benefit enormously from the incumbency factor, (2) they often face weak challengers in elections, and (3) they engage in a number of different symbolic and substantive forms of representation that speaks to African American culture, which enables them to build trust with their constituencies. The extant academic literature suggests an undeniable and significant increase in the electoral advantages afforded to congressional incumbents since the 1960s, demonstrating that members of Congress have an increased likelihood of returning to Washington through victory margins that result from the incumbency factor.[10] Scholars have argued that members of Congress have an increased incumbency advantage because of the increased use of office perquisites such as the Congressional frank and travel budgets.[11] They have also argued the beneficial effects of increased engagement in nonpartisan activities such as constituency services.[12]

Others suggest that the decline in partisan loyalties coupled with the increase in the number of voters identifying with the Independent Party is what best explains the electoral safety of incumbents. [13] On the other hand, the increasing incumbency

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[10] See Robert Erikson, "Malapportionment, Gerrymandering, and Party Fortunes in Congressional Elections," *American Political Science Review*, 66 (1972), 1234-1245; Richard Born, "Generational Replacement and the Growth of Incumbent Reelection Margins in the U.S. House," *American Political Science Review*, 13 (1979),811-817; Walter Burham, Walter, "Insulation and Responsiveness in Congressional Elections," *Political Science Quarterly*, 90 (1975): 411-435.

[11] Mayhew, *The Election Connection;* Albert Cover and David Mayhew, "Congressional Dynamics and the Decline of Competitive Elections," in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds., *Congress Reconsidered* (New York: Praeger, 1977).

[12] Morris Fiorina, "The Case of Vanishing Marginals: The Bureaucracy Did it," *American Political Science Review*, 71 (1977), 177-181.

[13] See Nelson, Candice, "The Effects of Incumbency on Voting in Congressional Elections," *Political Science Quarterly*, 93 (1978), 665-678; Mayhew, *The Election Connection*; Albert Cover; and David Mayhew, "Congressional Dynamics and the Decline of Competitive Elections," in *Congress Reconsidered*.

advantage can be attributed to ineffective opposition candidates.[14] Cox and Katz suggest that the increasing incumbency advantage is linked to a rise in the lack of quality candidates challenging incumbents.[15] Their argument suggests that incumbents have become better engineers of campaigns than their political opponents.

Much of the electoral success of African American incumbents is because of the benefits of the incumbency factor such as constituency service, weak challengers, congressional district demographics, and majority-minority congressional districts. There is entirely no reason to suspect that African American members of Congress do not utilize the same benefits of the incumbency factor afforded to Whites. African American legislators are rational actors driven by their desire for reelection. Therefore, they have an incentive to take advantage of the benefits of office to serve their reelection needs. Like their White counterparts, African American members of Congress seldom lose their reelection bids. No matter how much Whites who live in minority-majority districts may attempt to elect a White representative to Congress, a harsh reality is that their chances of success are minimal. The creation of minority-majority districts protects African American descriptive representation. Political scientists have often thought of political representation through policymaking; however, representation at the congressional level can facilitate individual engagement in a non-partisan manner, primarily through constituency service.

Gary Jacobson suggests, "From the 1950s through the 1980s, the electoral importance of individual candidates and campaigns expanded, while that of party labels

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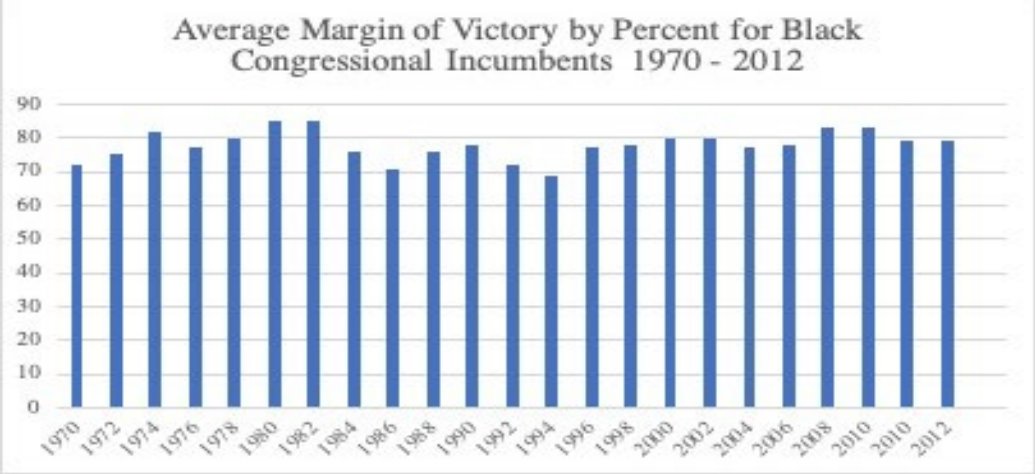
[14] Thomas Mann and Raymond Wolfinger, "Candidates and Parties in Congressional Elections," *American Political Science Review*, 74 (1980), 617-632; Thomas Mann, "Mobilization of Liberal Strength in the House, 1955-1970: The Democratic Study Group," *American Political Science Review*, 68 (1977), 667-68; Gary Jacobson, "Competition in U.S. Congressional Elections," in Michael P. McDonald and John Samples, eds., *The Marketplace of Democracy* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2006).

[15] Gary Cox and Jonathan Katz, *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: The Electoral Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

and national issues diminished." [16] Although scholars have debated the empirical measurements of the incumbency factor, they all seem to agree that "the emergence of a more candidate-centered electoral process helped one class of congressional candidates to prosper: the incumbent officeholder."[17] To be sure, the incumbency advantage offers significant electoral dividends.

Figure 1



Source: https://www.opensecrets.org/overview/reelect.php

Figure 1 reveals that members of Congress are more likely to get reelected. What is it about the incumbency advantage that yields such powerful electoral benefits? One of the classic explanations suggests that the institutional characteristics of Congress breed an environment in which incumbents use resources to serve their election objectives. In expressing his sentiments about the institution of Congress, David Mayhew contends, "If a group of planners sat down and tried to design a pair of American assemblies with the goal of serving members' reelection needs year in and year out, they would be hard-pressed to improve on what exists."[18] Such a political structure permits members of Congress to pursue their reelection goals. The structure of Congress fosters a

[16] Gary Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (New York: Longman Publishing, 2009), 27.
[17] Ibid, 27
[18] Mayhew, *The Election Connection,* 18-82.

decentralized committee system that allows members to specialize in a certain legislative area. This self-selection system positions the individual legislator to serve local interests better. Essentially, the specialization of committee service provides members of Congress with a legislative platform on which they can write and advocate for specific policies. Just as the institution of Congress facilitates an environment that benefits incumbents, parties also bow to the electoral needs of members. In exploring the underpinnings and inner workings of Congress, Mayhew noted that "the best service a party can supply to its congressmen is a negative one: It can leave them alone. Moreover, this is in general what parties do."[19] By leaving members alone, the system permits members to engage in position taking. According to Jacobson, "Members of Congress also voted themselves an astonishing array of official resources that could be used to pursue reelection. These include salary, travel, office, staff, and communication allowances that are now, by a conservative estimate, worth more than $1 million per year for each house member and up to several times that for senators."[20]

One of the significant advantages of being an incumbent is the official control of resources used to contact constituents.[21] Members of Congress expanded this effort in the 1960s by increasing the level of professionalization. One of the most widely accepted views is that "voters were more known to favor the candidate with whom they were familiar (that is, whose names they could recall when asked), so more extensive self-advertising by members could be expected to have direct electoral payoffs, assuming that it made them more familiar to voters" (Jacobson, 2006, 38).[22] Simply put, members of Congress are afforded the resources to achieve their reelection goals.

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[19] Mayhew, *The Election Connection,* 12.
[20] Gary Jacobson, "Competition in U.S. Congressional Elections," in Michael P. McDonald and John Samples, eds., *The Marketplace of Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2006), 36.
[21] Jacobson, Gary. "Terror, Terrain, and Turnout: Explaining the 2002 Midterm Elections," *Political Science Quarterly*, 118 (2004), 1-22.
[22] Gary Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (New York: Longman Publishing, 2009), 38.

CONSTITUENCY SERVICE

Despite the various mediums members of Congress utilize to enhance the incumbency advantage, Morris P. Fiorina (1977) has argued that constituency service is the most important vehicle.[23] Fiorina suggests that members of Congress were able to change the focus of their activities from simply a policymaking role to a more service-based role.[24] In describing this development, Gary Jacobson (2006) contends:

Essentially, they created needs and then reaped the rewards of spending more time and energy catering to them. In the three decades following World War II, Congress enacted legislation that greatly generated an increasing volume of demands from citizens for help in coping with bureaucratic mazes or in taking advantage of federal programs. Members responded to the demands by continually adding to their capacity to deliver assistance, including the growth of personal staff.[25]

This growth in demand provided an opportunity for legislators to engage in activities beyond policymaking. It created an opportunity for lawmakers to build up credibility among voters in their districts. Fiorina sums up the benefits of constituency service by suggesting that "the nice thing about casework is that it is mostly profit; one makes more friends than enemies."[26] Given the nonpartisan nature of constituency service, it is plausible that voters would prefer an incumbent candidate. Simply put, "incumbents' increased emphasis on nonpartisan district services has altered the meaning of the electoral choice."[27] As such, even if a voter did not support a candidate, they are still privy to these services.

The research on constituency service is long and complex yet much of the research covering this topic has not investigated Black constituency service. Christian R. Grose

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[23] Fiorina, Morris, "The Case of Vanishing Marginals: The Bureaucracy Did It," *American Political Science Review,* 71 (1977), 177-181.
[24] Ibid, 177-181.
[25] Jacobson, "Competition in U.S. Congressional Elections," 39.
[26] Morris, "The Case of Vanishing Marginals," 177-181.
[27] Jacobson, "Competition in U.S. Congressional Elections," 40.

(2011) has found that "the constituency service piece of representation is most critical" when it comes to building trust among Black voters in congressional districts.[28] Grose uncovers that African American Members of Congress do a better job of serving and reaching their African American constituents than do Whites. Voters in congressional districts rely on their members of Congress to help track down Social Security checks, obtain veteran benefits, get passports, tours of the congress, and investigate important matters. Grose argues that African American members of Congress strategically open offices in areas where their African American constituencies can easily have access.[29] African American Members of Congress generally employ staffers who are deeply rooted in the African American community. Employing African American staffers better helps the member of Congress to identify and address the concerns of the districts.[30] David Cannon contends that having staff members who are Black serves several important functions for African American members of Congress, all of which helps serve the individual member's reelection goals.[31] Cannon believes that hiring African American staffers in congressional offices signals the importance of race to the member's constituency and allows constituencies to receive assistance from people who have similar life experiences.[32] Even though constituency service is not policy work, it goes a very long way when it comes to building relationships within a congressional district. An individual voter might not remember what policy a member of Congress has passed, but they will certainly remember the assistance they received and are likely to reward the individual member during election season.

ELECTORAL CHARACTERISTICS: THE QUALITY OF THE CHALLENGER CANDIDATES

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[28] Christian Grose, *Congress in Black and White: Race and Representation in Washington and at Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 87.
[29] Grose, *Congress in Black and White.*
[30] Ibid, 29.
[31] David Cannon, *Race Redistricting, and Representation: The Unintended Consequences of Black Majority Districts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
[32] Ibid.

The quality of candidates challenging the sitting incumbents is another crucial factor that explains the success of African American incumbent candidates. Congressional incumbents often win decisively, regardless of the strength of the candidate: "many incumbents win easily by wide margins because they face inexperienced, sometimes reluctant challengers who lack the financial and organizational backing to mount a serious campaign for Congress."[33] Although frequent visits back to the home district, casework, and other legislative activities are aimed at winning reelection, candidates also employ these tactics to influence the perceptions of various constituencies and potential challengers. For example, if ambitious politicians perceive that they have no realistic chance at winning, they will be reluctant to challenge incumbents because challenging a popular incumbent is likely to be political suicide for one's career. The political organization and connections generally scare off ambitious politicians, and as a result, African American Congressional incumbents are overwhelmingly challenged by weak and inexperienced candidates.

Examining the quality of challengers in House elections, Krasno and Green[34] set forth the standard for measuring candidate quality, asserting that candidate quality must account for both attractiveness and political skill. Krasno and Green (1988) define these two attributes as follows: The term attractiveness includes the full range of attributes which may be appealing in the eyes of the voters; qualifications for office in the form of education or occupational experience, familiarity resulting from name recognition, and personal attractiveness due to the appearance of a personality. Political Skill refers to the ability to organize and conduct a campaign.[35]

Taking into account attractiveness and political skill, Krasno and Green create a candidate quality distribution index that captures the quality of challenges on a scale of

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[33] Jacobson, "Competition in U.S. Congressional Elections," 42.
[34] Jonathan S. Krasno and Donald Philip Green, "Preempting Quality Challengers in House Elections," *Journal of Politics,* 50 (1988), 920-36.
[35] Krasno and Green, "Preempting Quality Challengers in House Elections," 921.

0-7.[36] Candidates are assigned scores based on their level of political experience and political careers. The higher the level of the office a particular candidate has served in, the higher the score a particular candidate is assigned. For example, a candidate is assigned a 4 if he or she has current past or statewide political experience; a 3 if the candidate has current or past citywide political experience; a 2 if the candidate has current or past countywide political experience; a 1 if the candidate has appointed political experience; and a 0 if the candidate does not have any political experience.

Furthermore, Carson, Engstrom, and Roberts suggest that "candidate quality is a fundamental piece of the puzzle in understanding the historical development of the incumbency advantage in American politics" (289).[37] Moreover, the structure governing American congressional elections has significantly affected the competitiveness of congressional races.[38] Scholars such as Argersinger have found that elections in the nineteenth century were "characterized by high levels of partisanship and electoral competitiveness and slight shifts in voting or turnover of legislators were substantial."[39] Contemporary elections in the House are just the opposite, as has been previously demonstrated. Scholars have attributed the high reelection rates of House of Representatives members to several factors, including competitive elections[40] and partisan redistricting.[41]

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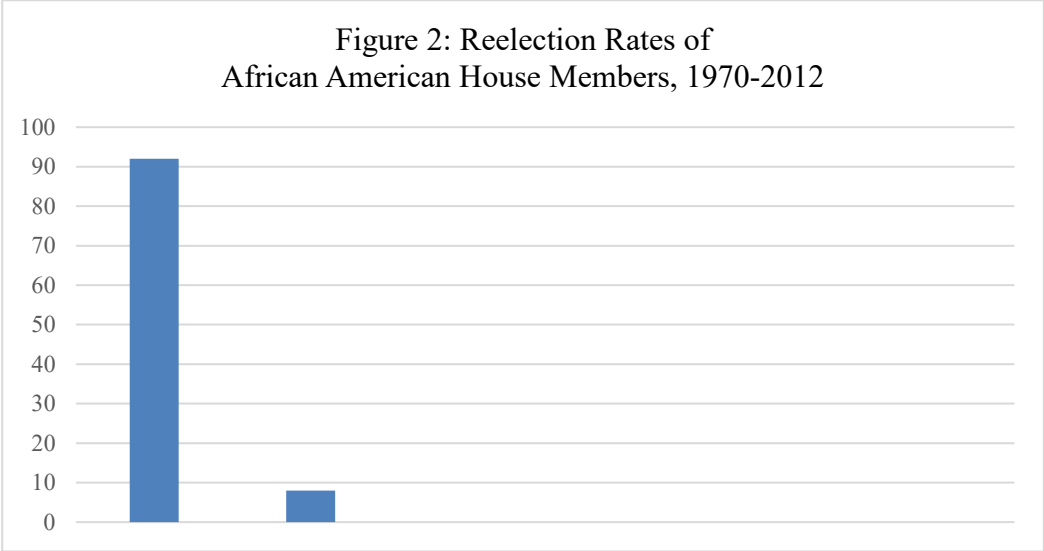
[36] Krasno and Green, "Preempting Quality Challengers in House Elections," *Journal of Politics*, 50 (1988), 920-36.
[37] Jamie Carson, Erik Engstrom, and Jason Roberts, "Redistricting, Candidate Entry, and Politics of the Nineteenth-Century U.S. House Elections," 289.
[38] Gary Jacobson, "The First Congressional Election After BCRA," in Michael Lalbin, ed., *One Election Later, 2004: Politics After the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act,* (Baltimore, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).
[39] Peter Argersinger, "New Perspectives on Election Fraud in the Gilded Age," *Political Science Quarterly*, 100 (1986): 668-687.
[40] David W. Brady and Bernard Grofman, "Sectional Differences in Partisan Bias and Electoral Responsiveness in U.S. House Elections, 1850-1980," *British Journal of Political Science*, 21 (1991), 247-256.
[41] Erik Engstrom and Samuel Kernell, "Manufactured Responsiveness: The Impact of State Electoral Laws on Unified Party Control of the Presidency and the U.S. House of Representatives, 1840-1940." *American Political Science Review*, 49 (2005), 547-65.

Even the method by which candidates were recruited for political office has been cited as a factor affecting the quality of challengers. Dallinger and Ostrogorski dispute the candidate recruitment process,[42] indicating that before the move toward the direct primary during the 1990s, party caucuses nominated congressional candidates. In this model, the quality of the candidate is determined by the composition of the actual nominating caucuses. Swenson and Bensel suggest that many of the political caucuses were operated by strong party organizations whose sole intentions were to recruit strong competitive candidates to challenge seats in Congress.[43]

Where do African Americans Congressional incumbents fit within this literature? Between 1970 and 2012, there was a total of 426 elections involving African American incumbents in the U.S. House of Representatives.



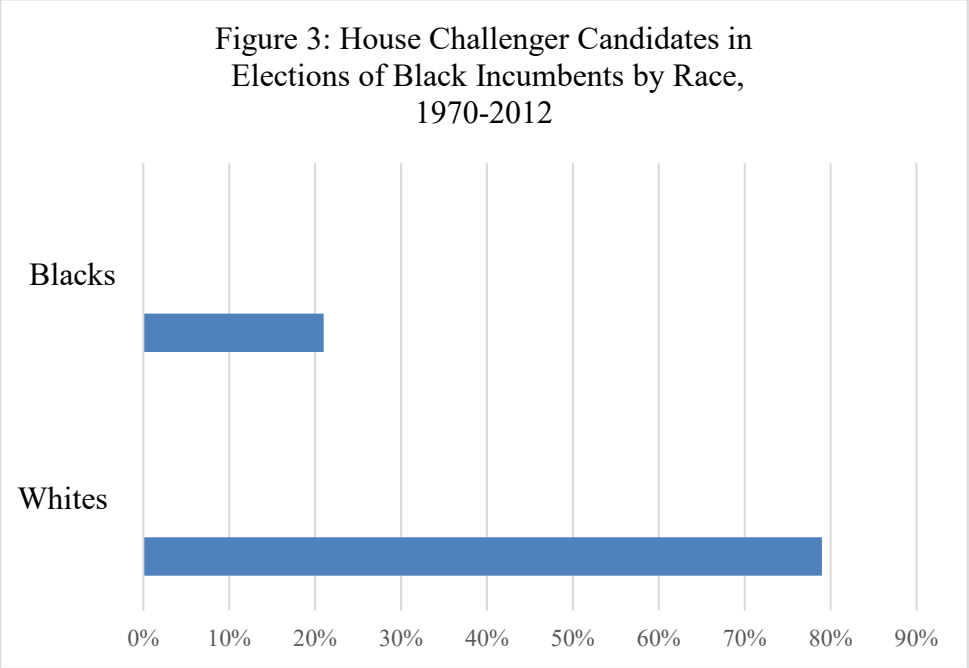
Source: Congressional Election Data, 1970-2012.

Figure 2 shows the reelection rate of African American Congressional Incumbents in1970-2012[44]. The data suggest that African American incumbents in Congress are reelected at

[42] Frederick W. Dallinger, *Nomination for Elective Office in the United States Senate* (NY: Longsman, 1897),
[43] Argersinger, "New Perspectives on Election Fraud in the Gilded Age," 668-687.
[44] To examine the electoral success of African American incumbents, this research relies on an original dataset of 1970-2012 and encompasses 426 elections of African

a very high rate. Figure 2 shows that nearly 92 percent of African American congressional incumbents between 1970 and 2012 were reelected, confirming the expectation of the incumbency advantage.

African American incumbents often face weak challengers and are more likely to be opposed in an election by a White opponent. According to figure 3, between 1970 and 2012, Whites made up about 79 percent of the candidates challenging Black incumbents while African Americans or other racial groups made up only 21 percent.



The incumbency factor scares off strong candidates from challenging congressional incumbents. According to Table 1, weak candidates overwhelmingly challenge African

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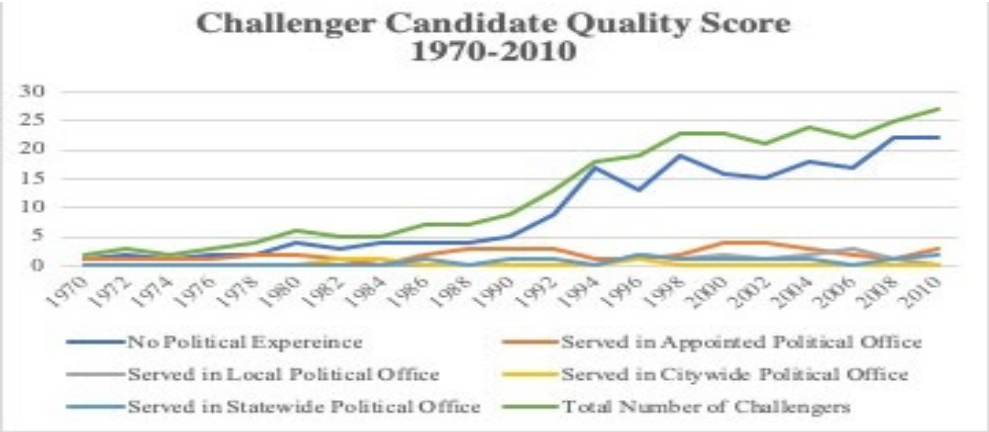
Americans in the U.S. House of Representatives. This analysis utilizes the U.S. House Clerk's publication entitled *Statistics of the Congressional Elections in the United States 1968-2012* and the U.S. Census Data, *The United States Congressional Districts and Data.* A record of all congressional elections returns for both the incumbents and the challenger candidates was compiled. Only elections involving African American incumbents were analyzed. To determine the race and quality of the challenger candidate, an extensive content analysis was conducted through the use of online newspaper searches and database (i.e. LexisNexis) queries.

American congressional incumbents. From 1970 to 2012, 74 percent of candidates challenging African American incumbents had no previous political experience, 15 percent had experience serving in appointed capacities, 3 percent had served in local countywide political office, 3 percent had served in citywide political offices, and 4 percent held current or past political experience in statewide political offices. Table 1 displays the challenger candidate quality score by election year from 1970 to 2012[45]. Table 1 demonstrates an increase in the number of challenger candidates with no political experience starting around 1992, this pattern continued well into the late 2000s.

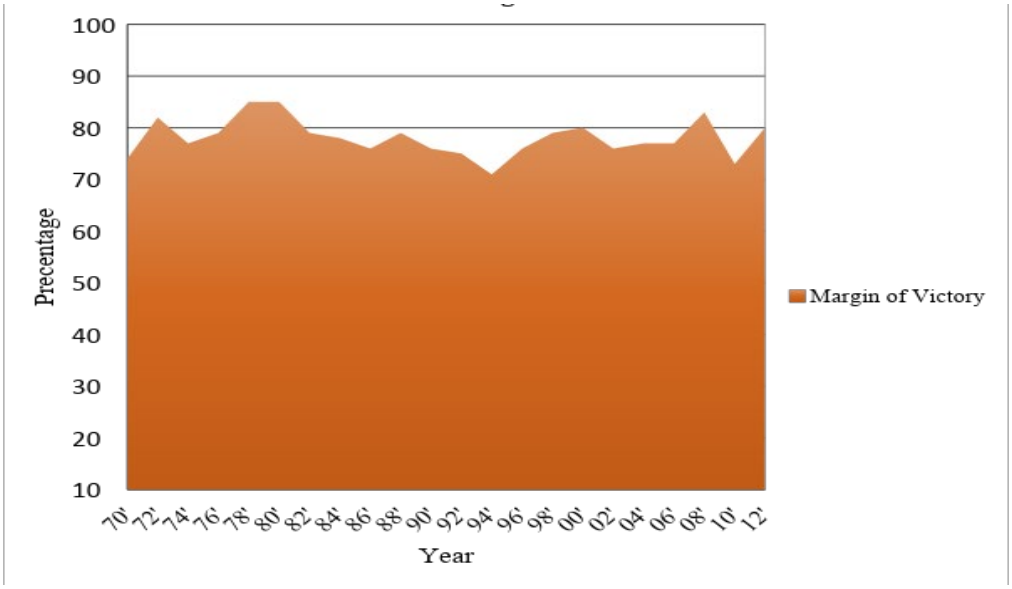
Table 1. Challenger Candidate Quality Score, 1970-2012



Even with the margin of victory, the evidence suggests that African American incumbents win reelection by a sizable proportion of the total vote share. The average margin of victory for African American members of Congress is 78 percent, with a range of 57-99 percent. The margin of victory for African American incumbents has remained stable over time. Figure 4 displays the average margin of victory for African American House incumbents by election year.

[45] Table 1 only includes the challenger candidate quality scores for which data is available. While *LexisNexis* provided much of the information regarding the past political experience for many of the challenger candidates, the candidate quality score for all elections within the sample was not determined.

Figure 4: Average Margin of Victory for Black Incumbents



Not only do African American Congressional incumbents win, but they do so by wide margins.

THE INTERSECTION OF DESCRIPTIVE AND SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL INCUMBENTS

The foundation of the fight from slavery to liberation for African Americans in the U.S. has been a long and contentious battle for political representation. The framers of the U.S. Constitution devoted much attention to the idea of representation. One of the primary debates at the Constitutional Convention of 1776 centered on this complex notion of representation. The Anti-Federalists wanted the legislative branch of government to reflect the makeup of society, and the Federalists believed that because members of the legislative body would be subject to elections, they would remain loyal to all segments of society. Nearly 200 years after the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and nearly 50 years after the Voting Rights Act of 1964, the critical debate about political representation remains an area of vigorous debate. Since the creation of majority-minority congressional districts, scholars have examined if the presence of African Americans in Congress is necessary to advance and represent the interest of African Americans. Hanna Pitkin

(1967) has made an essential distinction between descriptive representation and substantive representation.[46] Pitkin describes descriptive representation as those who "stand for" a specific group of individuals with whom they may share features such as race or gender. Pitkin describes substantive representation as those who "act for" a specific group of people in which the representative seeks to pursue and advance policies that reflect the interests of that group.[47] Put simply, descriptive representation occurs when a member of Congress shares features such as race while substantive representation occurs when a member of Congress pursues and enacts legislation that ultimately benefits the people that they have been elected to represent.

Since African Americans have not always been included within the institution of Congress, it is worth noting how African Americans Congressional incumbents benefit from both descriptive and substantive representation. Any discussion of political representation among African Americans must note that very few African Americans in the U.S. Congress are elected from districts with majority White electorates. As a result, an overwhelming majority of African American members of Congress are elected from majority Black districts, making their very first form of representation descriptive. One benefit of descriptive representation is its increase in political trust for historically marginalized groups such as African Americans. Claudine Gay finds that when a member of the same race in Congress represents African Americans, they are more likely to contact their member of Congress.[48] Similarly, Jane Mansbridge contends that descriptive representation can forge political trust between the representative and the people that they represent.[49] Moreover, descriptive representation adds to the quality of the policy debates in Congress and contributes to distinct policy outcomes.

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[46] Hannah Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).
[47] Ibid, 38.
[48] Claudine Gay, *Choosing Sides: Black Electoral Success and Racially Polarized Voting*, paper presented at the American Political Science Association, September, Atlanta, Georgia, 1999.
[49] Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes,'" *Journal of* Politics, 61 (1999),628-57.

Critics of descriptive representation downplay its significance because many in the school of thought suggest that African American members of Congress should be judged based on the number of pieces of legislation that they can pass. Any serious analysis of substantive representation must distinguish between bill sponsorship and bill passage. This line of thought ignores the fact that bill passage and lawmaking is only one aspect of legislative behavior. It also discounts the reality that African American members of Congress are also a minority within a deliberative body of more than 400 members. For example, Bratton and Haynie find that African American members of Congress are less successful at getting their legislation passed than their White colleagues.[50] Many factors such as the majority party, committee assignment, and party leadership impacts what legislation is considered and passed. Still, however, African American Members of Congress appear less successful at lawmaking than their White counterparts. Analyzing data from the 104th Congress, Tate shows that "typically Blacks sponsored about seven pieces of legislation in 104th Congress, while White Democrats sponsored about ten and Republicans about thirteen."[51] Bill sponsorship data from the 103rd Congress shows that African American Democrats were just as successful as White Democrats in ushering their legislation through Congress.[52] African American women in Congress have also played a significant role in bill sponsorship, at times having a more aggressive policy agenda than their male counterparts.

One of the most vocal critics of descriptive representation has been Carol Swain, who argues that Black descriptive representation is not required for substantive representation. [53] She further suggests that descriptive representation actually undermines substantive representation. She suggests that White members of Congress have represented Black interests better than some Black members. It is important to note

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[50] Kathleen Bratton and Kerry Haynie, "Agenda Setting and Legislative Success in State Legislatures: The Effect of Race and Gender," *Journal of Politics*, 61 (1999), 658-679.
[51] Katherine Tate, *Black Faces in the Mirror* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 79.
[52] Tate, *Black Faces in the Mirror*.
[53] Carol M. Swain, *Black Face, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 199).

that scholars have asserted that her findings are limited in scope because of her small sample size. Still, however, African American bill sponsorship holds significant implications for the value of descriptive representation. This representation literature contends that African American members of Congress bring distinct policy interests to the legislative chamber that represent the interests of African Americans. However, what exactly are "Black interests"? Black interests reflect policies and issues that have disproportionately impacted African Americans, including legislation concerning "civil rights, poverty, crime, and unemployment."[54]

Despite institutional features that present challenges to substantive representation, descriptive representation also positively impacts substantive representation. The clear policy interest of African American members is often found at the agenda-setting stage of the lawmaking process and in committee deliberations. Tate (2004) notes that African American members are more likely to serve on policy or constituency services committees, giving them a significant voice in deliberations.[55] Under this view, "agenda setting provides legislators with a broad opportunity to define problems and establish policy alternatives."[56] Cannon finds in this process that African American members of Congress join forces with other marginalized groups to sponsor bills and usher those bills through the legislative process.[57] In a comprehensive investigation of legislative behavior among African American lawmakers, Haynie finds that issues important to African Americans are significantly more likely to be introduced when African Americans are in legislative chambers.[58] Similarly, African Americans are more

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[54] Michele Swers and Stella Rouse, "Descriptive Representation: Understanding the Impact of Identity on Substantive Representation of Group Interests," in Eric Schickler and Frances Lee, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress,* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 246.
[55] Tate, *Black Faces in the Mirror*.
[56] Swers and Rouse, "Descriptive Representation," 252.
[57] David Cannon, *Race Redistricting, and Representation: The Unintended Consequences of Black Majority Districts.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
[58] Kerry Haynie, *African American Legislators in the American States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

likely to participate in hearings and other forms of committee work when policies that reflect African American interests are debated.[59]

The extant literature on African American legislative behavior within the U.S. Congress reveals that descriptive representation matters for substantive and symbolic policy outcomes. These policy pursuits engage African American culture in a way that connects to the intimacy of the African American community. Symbolic legislation has played a significant role in assisting African Congressional incumbents in achieving their reelection goals. According to Valeria Sinclair Chapman, symbolic legislation is any "legislation sponsored with the objective of giving psychological reassurance to constituents that representatives are working in their interest and are responsive to their needs."[60] Many African American members of Congress have sponsored resolutions that are examples of symbolic legislation to honor important figures in the African American community. For example, Democratic Congressman Bennie G. Thomson from Mississippi's 2nd Congressional District sponsored a bill that renamed the post office in Jackson, Mississippi after Civil Rights activist Medgar Evers. He also sponsored a resolution that named the post office in Ruleville, Mississippi, after Fannie Lou Hamer. Members also sponsor resolutions honoring teachers, activists, university administrators, and many other segments of the African American community. It was symbolic legislation sponsored by Congressman John Lewis that led to a national holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. While these resolutions may seem trivial, the representation of African American figures by African American members of Congress serves an essential function in providing reassurance to African American constituencies.

Just as African American members of Congress pursue symbolic legislation, they also sponsor substantive legislation that reflects the interest of African Americans. African American interests include any legislation that seeks to impact the lives of African

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[59] Katrina Gamble, "Black Political Representation: An Examination of Legislative Activity within U.S. House Committee" *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 32 (2007), 421-46.
[60] Valeria Sinclair Chapman, *Presence, Promise, and Progress; Black Representation in the U.S. Congress* (Unpublished manuscript, Ohio State University, 2002).

Americans positively. Substantive bills sponsored[61] by African Americans in the 116th Congress:

H.R. 582: Raise Wage Act

H.R. 4: Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2019

H.R. 40: Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposal for African Americans

H.R. 7390: Violence Against Women Act of 2019

H.R. 4448: Medicare Drug Pre-Negotiation Act

H.R. 447: Affordable and Safe Prescription Act

H.R. 35: Emmett Till Anti-lynching Act.

Each of these pieces of legislation represents essential issues to the African American community. These House Resolution sponsorships by African American members of Congress allow members to claim credit for advocating for the interests of their constituencies. Members are then able to use these items as they campaign for re-election. Additionally, members are able to communicate the nature and potential impact of these laws in newsletters and town-hall meetings. African American members of Congress have also been highly successful at "bringing home the bacon," an expression that refers to the securing of federal funding for projects within their district. Christian Grose (2011) finds "Black representatives are more likely than White representatives to allocate projects to Black constituents."[62] Specifically, Grose shows that "there is a direct relationship between the election of African American legislators" and funding for "historically Black colleges and universities."[63] From the vantage point of a constituency, this advocacy connects to the concerns of the community, allowing members to build a reputation for substantive advocacy.

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[61] While this list is not exhaustive, it does reflect a small sample of the types of substantive policies that African Americans in the U.S. House of Representatives pursue. The above mentioned House Resolutions were sponsored by Maxine Waters, Shelia Jackson Lee, Elijah Cummings, or Bobby Rush.

[62] Grose, *Congress in Black and White*, 135.

[63] Ibid, 136.

Although individual legislators have indeed sponsored substantive legislation, the Congressional Black Caucus has been instrumental in keeping the substantive policies relevant to African Americans on the political agenda. Since its founding in 1971, the Congressional Black Caucus has been a strong advocate for reforming criminal justice, fighting voter suppression, expanding access and making health care more affordable, protecting workers, and improving access to quality education. In advocating for these issues, Rep. Willie L. Clay, Sr. said, "Black people have not permanent friends, no permanent enemies….just permanent interest." One of the challenges, however, has been that the interests of the Congressional Black Caucus have not always been the interests of the Democratic Party. The representational dilemma faced by African American House members is that they must satisfy their constituencies and their political party. The role of party leadership, committee assignments, rank, and party unity has often presented internal dissension for African American House members.

Despite this incongruence between the Democratic Party and the Congressional Black Caucus on issues important to African Americans, the Congressional Black Caucus has been an influential force in advocating for Black interests. Pinney and Serra have found that social issues remain an important policy priority for members of the Congressional Black Caucus,[64] noting a substantial degree of cohesion among caucus members and finding that caucus members strategically use their ability to co-sponsor legislation to serve their political ambition. In addition to the Congressional Black Caucus's focus on social issues impacting the African American community, the caucus has also established an alternative annual budget. It is often said that budgets reflect priorities. Nothing reveals the Congressional Black Caucus's policy priorities than their alternative budget. The Congressional Black Caucus 2018 Alternative Budget called for a fairer tax code to generate more than $3.9 trillion. Under this proposal $1 trillion would be used to enhance infrastructure in historically underserved communities. The budget also allocates $250 billion for K-12 and higher education. The budget proposal further expands universal

[64] Neil Pinney and George Serra, "A Voice for Black Interest: Congressional Black Caucus Cohesion and Cosponsorship," *Congress and the Presidency*, 29 (2002), 69-86.

health care by allocating $23 billion over the next ten years.[65] Although their budget is very progressive and indeed represents the interest of African Americans, leaders in the Democratic Party have not gotten behind these proposals and U.S. presidents have historically ignored these proposals.

CONCLUSION

According to McCormick (2015), African American politics is predicated on the assumption that "(1) that the election of more Black politicians would contribute to material improvement in the lives of African Americans who live in the United States; and (2) Black elected officials would seek to pursue policy initiatives designed to improve the lives of African American Americans" (1).[66] Although mainstream political science scholarship has neglected to center African American congressional incumbents into their studies, these politicians—like their White counterparts—have taken advantage of the incumbency factor. These politicians have brought distinct policy interests to the U.S. Congress as they have represented Black interests descriptively and substantively.

Consistent with much of what political scientists know, African American congressional incumbents 1) benefit enormously from the incumbency factor, (2) often face weak challengers in elections, and (3) engage in many different symbolic and substantive forms of representation that speak to African American culture. In addition to facing weak challenger candidates, they typically win their bid for reelection by large margins. Scholarly understandings of political representation have traditionally treated descriptive and substantive representation as two distinct forms of representation;

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[65] "CBC Releases Alternative FY 2018 Budget," Washington, DC, March 15, 2017, accessed October 30, 2019, https://cbc.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=429

[66] Joseph McCormick, "The Obama Presidencies and the Continuing Significance of the Racial Divide in American Politics," in Todd Shaw and Robert Brown, eds., *After Obama: African-American Politics in the Obama Era* (unpublished, 2015).

however, for African American Congressional incumbents, symbolic representation is also substantive representation. Both descriptive and substantive representation are necessary components of African American political representation. One is inconceivable without the other. It is not enough to simply evaluate African American members of Congress on the number of bills they are able to pass. Any serious attempt to evaluate these members must engage a holistic view of their representational styles.

The evidence presented here raises several important questions concerning Black political representation. First and foremost, most of the scholars studying Black political representation must move the discussion from one that seeks to uncover the ability of African American politicians to make a substantive change in the Black community. Furthermore, scholars must look beyond the question of whether or not Whites will vote for an African American candidate. The creation of majority-Black districts and the incumbency factor seem to create a haven for Black representation at the congressional level. In 2018, several African Americans were elected to the U.S. Congress from majority White districts, presenting an opportunity to investigate how and if representation can facilitate racial learning and the conditions or context in which this learning is more likely to take place. Additionally, future research must continue to disaggregate White response to African American leadership by the level of political office.

Discussion Questions

1. Essential to representative democracy is the concept of representation. Compare and contrast descriptive and substantive representation. Which type of representation is more beneficial? How do these different forms of representation benefit both constituencies and African American Congressional incumbents?
2. Describe the incumbency factor. How have African American Congressional incumbents benefited from the incumbency factor?
3. Scholars studying representation have attempted to define Black interests. Based on the information presented in this chapter, is the included definition sufficient? If so, why? If not, why not?

4. What is the impact of descriptive representation on substantive policy outcomes?

Writing Prompt

Identify at least two African Americans currently serving in Congress. Research their legislative records and discuss which form of representation reflects in the types of bills they have sponsored and co-sponsored.

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Reviews of the First Edition

"The book, with its single authored chapters representing different disciplines, allowed the reader to examine many elements of African American experiences from different perspectives. I particularly appreciated that many of the chapters were based on original research done by the authors themselves. The chapters addressed topics not often found in general books focusing on black experiences. From Powell's examination on notions of beauty to Andrew Smith's look at the "cultural diplomacy of sport," to Riley's look at Black political incumbents, this book gives us a glimpse into the multidimensional lives of African Americans."

Nemata Blyden
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"In Slavery to Liberation: The African American Experience, the editors and contributors have created an insightful set of essays on the diversity of the Black experience in the United States; it will undoubtedly serve as a valuable text for teaching and a source of stimulating thoughts for the general reader."

Sara Zeigler
Provost, Eastern Kentucky University

Slavery to Liberation: The African American Experience (Second Edition) gives instructors, students, and general readers a comprehensive and up-to-date account of African Americans' cultural and political history, economic development, artistic expressiveness, and religious and philosophical worldviews in a critical framework. It offers sound interdisciplinary analysis of selected historical and contemporary issues surrounding the origins and manifestations of White supremacy in the United States. By placing race at the center of the work, the book offers significant lessons for understanding the institutional marginalization of Blacks in contemporary America and their historical resistance and perseverance.

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